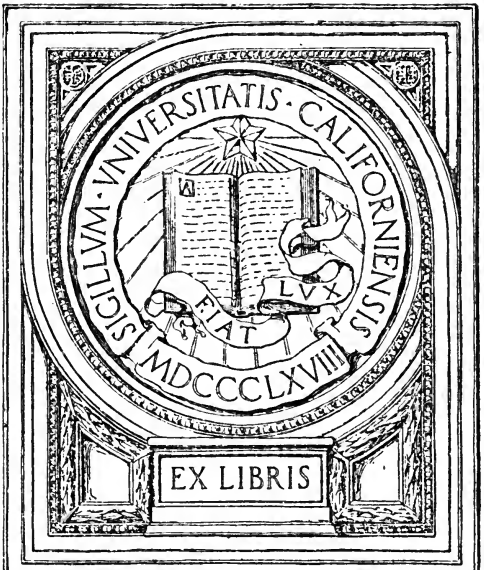
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THE SONG OF SONGS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE HEBREW.

With a Study of the Plan, the Age, and the Character of the Poem.

BY

ERNEST RENAN,

Member of the Academy.

DONE INTO ENGLISH BY

WILLIAM M. THOMSON.

London:

WM. M. THOMSON,

LUDGATE HILL, E.C.

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ENGLISH TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

—o—

THIS translation into English of the *Song of Songs*, or *Song of Solomon*, is given to the public as a companion work to the *Book of Job*, both works having been translated direct from the Hebrew into French by Ernest Renan. That M. Renan was fully competent for such a task will not be seriously questioned by any one; critics of all shades of opinion, religious or secular, having for many years assigned him the very highest place as a Hebrew scholar. Moreover, no man living has made the study of the Semitic races and their literature so peculiarly his own as has the author of the *Life of Jesus*. To him it has been the almost

exclusive work of a life-time. Among many who have tacitly held M. Renan's Hebrew erudition in high esteem, may be mentioned the translators of the New Version of the Old Testament. It is not too much to say that, in the *Book of Job*, *Ecclesiastes*, and especially in the *Song of Songs*, they have slavishly followed M. Renan's translations as far as they dare, without, of course, recognising their indebtedness to our author. The most cursory comparison of the two translations will satisfy any one who understands French and English on this point. The design of the present translation of the *Song of Songs* is to present the work in English as nearly as possible as M. Renan has presented it in French; and not as the translators of the New Version, who were in no sense free agents, have seen fit to render it. I do not say that the authors of the New Version have wilfully perverted the sense. In no instance have they done this,

so far as I have been able to discover. But, in deference to a false modesty, or to Mrs Grundy, if you will, they have so "glossed over" certain passages, that it is hardly possible at first sight to recognise them. One instance of this will suffice for our present purpose. In the Authorised Version, chap. III., v. 9-10, we read: "King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love *for* the daughters of Jerusalem." The New Version runs: "King Solomon made himself a palanquin of the wood of Lebanon; he made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love *from* the daughters of Jerusalem." M. Renan's version is this: "King Solomon had made for himself a couch of the wood of Lebanon; the posts were of silver, the pilasters of gold,

the curtains of purple; in the centre sparkled a beauty chosen from amongst the daughters of Jerusalem." (*Au centre brille une belle choisie entre les filles de Jérusalem.*) The reader will find many other similar instances if he compares this version with the New Version. Before leaving this part of the subject, let me give a few more instances to prove that the authors of the New Version have not done their work so well as might have been expected of them.

Chap. I., v. 4, "Draw me, we will run after thee," should be, "Draw me after thee, let us flee." Chap. II., v. 4, "banqueting house" should read "wine house." The "wine house" was an apartment above ground in which the wine was distributed; it was not a place for drinking. In chap. II., v. 8, we read in the New Version: "The voice of my beloved! behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My

beloved is like a roe or a young hart." Here the translators of the New Version have missed the poetical idea. The poet represents the lover as bounding over the mountains with all the strength and agility of a roe, and skipping upon the hills with all the lightness and grace of a hind's fawn —*faon des biches.* A "young hart" does not necessarily connote lightness and grace. The intelligent reader will discover other misrenderings, equally important.

M. Renan's arrangement of the *Song of Songs* into a drama of five acts, with an epilogue, has given rise to much controversy. By the "unco guid" it has been denounced as blasphemous; by people holding moderate views on the question of divine inspiration, it has been described as incomplete and inconsistent; while by out-and-out sceptics it has been regarded as a work of supererogation, being no more deserving of separate and serious treatment than was one of the "racy" tales

of Boccaccio or Margaret of Navarre. M. Renan has answered all these critics in the admirable and exhaustive "study," of about 200 pp. in length, which precedes the translation of the *Song*. Indeed, this study is by far the most important part of the present work. It is divided into three parts—(1) the plan; (2) the age; and (3) the character of the poem. The hypothesis M. Renan advances, to explain the plan of the work, is to my mind complete. At any rate, it fulfils the primary and essential condition of a legitimate hypothesis: it is consistent with itself, and explains the facts to which it is applied, and in a way that no other conceivable hypothesis can. Nay, more, it explodes the hypothesis invented by the early Jewish and Christian fathers, as to the mystical meaning of the *Song* as touching God and the Church. M. Renan is equally successful in fixing the age of the poem, and in demonstrating that it could not have been written

by Solomon. As to the character of the poem, M. Renan has no difficulty in proving that, of all the books in the Bible (the Book of Esther alone excepted, in which the name of God is not even once mentioned), the *Song of Songs* is the last that could lay claim to divine inspiration, in the sense in which these words are commonly accepted. It is a profane work, and possesses no mystical meaning whatever. It is, in fact, an erotic poem and its language is to be accepted literally. It deals wholly and exclusively with that passion which we are accustomed to denominate love; or, we might say, love *versus* lust. Solomon is represented as being desirous of obtaining possession of the person of the Shulammite for the gratification of his lust, but, despite his grandeur and glory, and tempting offers, he is baffled by a young shepherd, the lover of the Shulammite.

That a book of the nature of the *Song of Songs* should, for a period of nearly three

thousand years, have excited the interest and curiosity of generation after generation, is not to be wondered at. Its subject-matter, as we have said, is love. Now, love is a passion of which no particular age, or any particular section of mankind, ever had or has a monopoly. It is common to the king and the peasant, to the palace and the cot. No man or woman has been so great or so mean as not at some period of his or her life to have been brought more or less under its thrall; or, at any rate, to have given it more or less attention. It is a passion which is felt by every one, and is understood by none. It is ever young and unchanging in its operations—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Our grandchildren will fall in love in the same way as our grandmothers and grandfathers did, and so *ad infinitum*. Herein has consisted and consists the charm of the *Song of Songs*. It is a universal appeal to mankind.

But, apart from its subject, the *Song of Songs*,

as has already been intimated, possesses a special and peculiar interest. Not only has it been read and studied more widely than any love story, ancient or modern, but also, it has passed for over two thousand years as a composition of such transcendent merit as to be mistaken for a work of direct divine inspiration. This is high praise, but it is not wholly undeserved, as M. Renan has shown in the accompanying "study." That the design of the author, whoever he may have been, will ever be thoroughly understood and appreciated, is not probable. The poem contains passages that are beyond the capacity of human intelligence now to elucidate. The times in which it was written have long passed away, and the customs which it essays to describe, with them. In such instances, M. Renan has given what he considers the most probable interpretation, together with his reasons therefor. M. Renan does not expect that his opinions on doubtful passages will pass unquestioned.

He admits frankly in the "study" that the arrangement he has finally made of the poem in the dramatic version is not the one he has always advocated or inclined to. For example, he says that for a long time he was of opinion that a transposition of the scenes represented in the poem was the only way by which the meaning of the author could be made clear; but just at the moment when he was about to give effect to this opinion, his hand trembled, and he relented.

There is one criticism we have to offer on M. Renan's estimate of the poem. M. Renan, while repudiating the idea of divine inspiration, will not, on the other hand, admit that the poem is a purely erotic production. He is not very consistent in this. For, in one place, he avers that the language in which Solomon addresses the Shulammite, in his first endeavours to overcome her virtue, is only fitted for the ears of a prostitute; in another, that he was compelled to

"tone down" certain passages; while, in a third, he maintains that, though the teaching of the poem in the mind of the poet was undoubtedly moral, the same could not be said of a poet who, in our days, would clothe his thoughts in such a dress. To the pure all things are pure, and it is in this spirit that I have performed my part of the work, in placing before an English reading public (to use the words of M. Renan) "this antique work in all its chaste nudity."

WM. M. THOMSON.

TO M. LE BARON DE BUNSEN.

—o—

When I saw you five months ago, I was still hesitating whether to give this book to the public, a book upon which frivolity might easily expend itself. Your exhortations, and the agreement which I remarked between your views and mine, inclines me not to be deterred, by the misapprehension of a few, from doing that which might not be without benefit to some others. You informed me that the *Canticle* was a part of your Bible, and that you read it once every year. You made me understand that in the Church, which we maintain, everything is of service in view of eternity, and your conversations revealed to me how much joy (I

do not speak of common gaiety) could be filled into life, if we could only find again the art of exciting a passion for the beautiful and the true. Read, then, this spring, the Shulam pastoral, under your orange trees at Cannes, and return soon to tell us that science is ever young, that she supposes freshness of soul, and that, when she fills up life, she puts off old age.

5th April 1860.

PREFACE.

—o—

ISRAEL has sometimes allowed herself to be led away from her high destiny, and for centuries together we witness this people forgetting the religious mission it had been called upon to fulfil. Judea, become the *Holy Land* for civilised humanity, appears only to us at such times as a country of priests and of prophets; all the monuments of Hebrew literature are, at first glance, the sacred books. But this is a delusion, resulting from the prejudice which prevents us from seeing in great things the very principle which constitutes their greatness. An

attentive study of these different written data, devoted wholly to religion, reveal to us numerous traces of a profane life, which, not being the most brilliant side of the Jewish people, has naturally been cast into the shade. By a strange miracle (thanks to a species of contempt in regard to which criticism could not afford to be very severe, since she has preserved to us the most curious, perhaps, of the monuments of antiquity), an entire book, the work of those moments of forgetfulness, when the people of God allowed their infinite hopes to slumber, has come down to us. The *Song of Songs* is not the only profane composition which the Bible comprises, but it is, among several, the one as to which the scribes who decided the fate of Hebrew writings have most extended their rules as to admitting such works. I hence believe that I have done a useful work in studying, after the *Book of Job*, this other book, which, though less important as regards philosophy and religion, is yet, also,

most essential to any one who would know exactly the history of the development of the Hebrew mind.

The peculiar nature of the difficulties contained in the *Song of Songs* obliges me in this paper to follow a plan a little different from that which I adopted for the *Book of Job*. In neither of these two studies did I propose to myself to make a continuous commentary, in which the meaning of every difficult passage should be discussed; rarely have I been led to propose in detail entirely new interpretations; the justification of my translation is found, consequently, in the number of works in which each line of these antique writings, together with their developments, has been examined, to which I have added but little. But in that which concerns the *Song of Songs*, some additional explanations were necessary. The plan of the work, which, in the *Book of Job*, is manifest, offers, in the poem now in question, the most serious diffi-

culties; to speak truly, it is this which is the great problem in the exegesis of the *Song of Songs.* I have, therefore, presented to the reader, without once recoiling before the necessity of the most complicated deductions, the whole series of reasonings which have conducted me to my conclusions in regard to the nature of the poem. This is the object of the first paragraph of the *Preliminary Study.* Without these details, the arrangement which I have given to the poem might appear an artificial one, and many places might present the appearance of over-refinement.

The same consideration has forced me to adopt a course in the arrangement of the translation which at first may surprise, but whose utility, I hope, will be recognised. The translation will be found in this volume to be twice printed; in the first instance, without any explanatory addition, and under a form which should not raise any prejudice as to the plan of the poem, the

only divisions found in it being those which at first sight strike the eye of an attentive reader, and those divisions in other respects having only a provisional character;[1] in the second instance, the divisions and explanations which result from the discussion to which I have applied myself in the preliminary study on the plan of the poem. If I had limited myself to the first form, I should have failed in the most essential duty of a translator who would give the reader a text which explains itself. If I had given only the second form, I might have been justly reproached for thrusting forward my system with my translation; it would have been difficult to make an abstract of the divisions and of the scenic indications; the naked text would not have been sufficiently disentangled. Contrariwise, in the arrangement I have adopted, the liberty of the reader is fully respected. He

[1] The old division into chapters and verses, which have no critical value, but which are used for the citations, is marked, according to the Hebrew, in the margin of the first translation.

may, if it seem good to him, by reading only the first version, attempt to construct a better hypothesis than the one I have submitted. I warn those, however, who would attempt this ordeal, that the plan which I have fixed upon is that which is the result of the labours of several generations of industrious interpreters. It will be easy, at first sight, to find weak parts in it; but if one would consider it as a whole, and not direct one's attention exclusively to certain passages, such a one would, I believe, be brought to acknowledge that it is impossible to propose any other arrangement. The latter, however, be it understood, is applicable only to the *ensemble* of the poem. A multitude of shades of meaning are, in a book of this nature, left to the discrimination of each individual; nay, it is even probable that the author did not take so strict account of the details of the different parts as our habits of thought require. Two passages especially (VI. 11, *et seq.*; VIII. 8, *et*

seq.) are extremely difficult. I have given the explanation which appeared to me the most probable; and it would be presumptuous in me to speak with assurance on passages that are so obscure.

I will not dissimulate that there was another method which at first attracted me, and which I only renounced when I had subjected my work to a final revision. I had for long thought that the only means which could remedy the difficulties that the plan of the *Canticle* seemed to offer, was the transposition of some of the scenes. Certain it is, that in the actual condition of the poem, the chronological order is altogether reversed. Thus, in chap. I., we witness the young maiden make her entry into the seraglio; at chap. III. she enters, for the first time, into Jerusalem; at chap VI. she is waylaid at Shulam by the retainers of Solomon; at chap. VIII. her brothers seem to enter into a plot, the development of which constitutes the *nodus* of the

poem. It was in these two last portions, especially, that I found the temptation to be resolute, and I avow that I am sometimes yet carried to believe that the poem has been subjected to grave abuses. But at the moment I realised the boldness of the step, of touching up a text so anciently established, my hand trembled. The poem, such as it is, being capable of being brought back to its original form—certainly not to a form to satisfy our exaggerated ideas as to dramatic art, but to a connected form—I am interdicted from the employment of extreme means, to which recourse should only be had in cases of absolute necessity.

I know that several passages in the translation will appear a little shocking to two classes of persons; first, to those who admire only in antiquity that which resembles, more or less, forms adapted to French taste; in the second place, to those who know only the *Canticle*

through the mystic veil with which the religious conscience has for centuries surrounded it. The latter are naturally those whose habits it has cost me the most pain to combat. It is never without hesitation that I have carried my hand over sacred texts which have founded or sustained hopes of eternity, nor, in the name of critical science, to rectify those conflicting secular meanings which have consoled humanity, which have assisted man to cross so many arid deserts, and which have enabled him to conquer truths much superior to those of philosophy. It were better that humanity should have hoped for a Messiah, than to have fully comprehended the passage in Isaiah, where it believes it has seen him announced; it were better that it should have believed in the resurrection than to have carefully read and fully comprehended such an obscure passage in the book of Job, upon the faith of which its future deliverance is affirmed. Where should we be, if the con-

temporaries of Christ and the founders of Christianity had been as good philologists as Gesenius? Faith in the resurrection and faith in the Messiah have accomplished greater things than the exact science of the grammarian. But it is the grandeur of the modern human mind not to sacrifice the legitimate wants of human nature; our hopes depend no longer on a text, whether well or ill understood. Each, however, imposes his faith upon texts much more than he is aware of. Those who need the authority of Job to enable them to hope in the future, will not believe the Hebraist, who expounds to them his doubts and his objections; without being disturbed by a different interpretation, they will boldly declare with humanity: *De terra surrecturus sum.* In like manner, the *Canticle,* so dear to so many pious souls, will exist in spite of our demonstrations. Like an antique statue which the piety of the middle ages has transformed into a madonna,

it will continue to be respected, even when archæology shall have proved its profane origin. As for me, my aim has not been to detract from the veneration of the image now become holy, but to despoil it for a moment of its wings, in order to show to laymen antique art in its chaste nudity.

A STUDY

OF THE

PLAN, AGE, AND CHARACTER OF THE POEM.

THE *Song of Songs* is one of the Hebrew books which, in relation to language, presents the fewest difficulties, yet, of all the literary monuments of the Jewish people, it is unquestionably the one whose plan, nature, and general sense are the most obscure. Without taking into account the innumerable mystical and allegorical explanations advanced by theologians, and not one of which (as we shall demonstrate later on) has any foundation in the original, two opposing schemes still divide the exegetes as to what concerns this singular book. According to some, a connected action links together the different parts of the poem, and makes of it a coherent composition, possessing a unity. According to others, the *Song of Songs* is but a series of amorous lyrics, possessing no other bond of unity than the analogy of the subject, and not implying

beyond that a dramatic action. Although the second scheme appears to us unsustainable, and is to-day all but abandoned, we can yet understand that the *ensemble* of the poem must present some difficulties, when such men as Herder, Paulus, Eichhorn, W. Jones, de Wette, have been driven to admit an hypothesis so desperate. A hasty glance at the *Song of Songs* justifies, moreover, the hesitations of so many eminent critics. We believe that, if the reader would carefully run over the first of our translations of the work, it would be evident to him that divers Parts, such as the second, third, eighth, eleventh, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth, embody precise and undoubted allusions to a dramatic action, whose general contexture is readily discovered. Several incidents in these Parts are devoid of meaning, if we regard the divisions in which they occur merely as simple detached romances. On the other hand, if we seek in the poem for a regular development, similar to that which is found in our modern dramas, we encounter insuperable difficulties; and we are fain to believe that the order of the scenes has been inverted, or that some parts have been misplaced. A minute examination of the complete poem, verse by verse, can alone furnish us with a key to this singular problem.

Every one is agreed as to two points: first, that the poem is in dialogue, although the distinction of characters has not been indicated; and second

that it divides itself into distinct parts, similar to our acts and scenes. Two species of refrain recur quite regularly in certain places, leaving little doubt as to the second point. Thus, after verse II. 7, III. 5, V. 1, VI. 10, VII. 11, VIII. 4, and VIII. 7, there are evident pauses. An examination of the poem can alone reveal to us with precision the number and the importance of these breaks. But, henceforward, it may be permissible to adopt a division, which shall prejudge nothing in respect of the plan of the work. In pausing at all the places where we are conscious of an abrupt change of situation, we are led to divide the poem into sixteen Parts, as follows:—

I.	I, 2[1]	—	I, 4
II.	I, 5	—	I, 6
III.	I, 7	—	I, 8
IV.	I, 9	—	I, 11
V.	I, 12	—	II, 7
VI.	II, 8	—	II, 17
VII.	III, 1	—	III, 5
VIII.	III, 6	—	III, 11
IX.	IV, 1	—	V, 1
X.	V, 2	—	VI, 3
XI.	VI, 4	—	VI, 10
XII.	VI, 11	—	VII, 11

[1] Verse 1 in the Hebrew corresponds to the title. It must be observed that the figures of the verses of the Hebrew text differ sometimes from those of the Vulgate, but never more than a unit.

XIII.	.	.	VII, 12	—	VIII, 4
XIV.	.	.	VIII, 5	—	VIII, 7
XV.	.	.	VIII, 8	—	VIII, 12
XVI.	.	.	VIII, 13	—	VIII, 14

This division will serve as a basis for our examination, although we hope to demonstrate that several of the Parts, which we separate provisionally, offer a stronger bond and sequence than one would have believed at first glance. It is taken for granted that, in the whole of the reasonings which are to follow, that the reader has constantly before his eyes the first of our two translations, where the clearly apparent division we have just indicated has been adopted.

I. Part One consists of the three first verses of the poem, which evidently constitute an *ensemble.* These three verses were, no doubt, pronounced by one or several women. At first sight it seems natural to put all the three verses in the mouth of a captive lover, who sighs after her absent beloved. The rest of the work, in fact, constantly brings us back to this theme. But, in examining it closely, we see that such an interpretation is fraught with the gravest difficulties. First, the expression of the love in the three verses in question is wholly sensual. The comparison of love to wine is objectionable, for in the rest of the poem the captive lover always expresses

herself with much delicacy. Besides, there are some places in the Part which we are discussing (verse 4) which seem to be pronounced by a chorus of females. When the captive lover is speaking for herself alone, she never uses the verb in the first person plural. In a word, verses 3 and 4 presuppose that the man to whom these protestations of love are addressed is beloved at the same time of several women, which has no meaning in the mouth of a lover who sighs for a lover separated from her. Let us add that the word *alamoth* designates the group of women who love the hero—designates elsewhere (vi. 8) in a positive manner the odalisques of Solomon. It seems, then, that we must understand these three verses as representing a scene in the harem.[1] Each of the women sighs for the favours of the master, and the latter is no other than Solomon (the sequel certainly proves this). They express their love to him in passionate invitations, which is forthwith put into the mouths of the whole chorus, then taken up by a single female.

As to the words, "The king has brought me into his chambers," I think that we ought to attribute them to a young woman who has just been shut up in the harem. This conjecture becomes almost a certainty when we examine the succeeding verses, where we see a young woman (the heroine of the

[1] This is a point which MM. Bœttcher and Hitzig were the first to fully understand.

poem) addressing herself for the first time to the ladies of the seraglio. We must not be astonished at such a scenic indication put into the mouth of the actor being awkward and contrary to our usages. It is here that we discover the first example of a dramatic method which we shall see applied throughout the whole poem, and which consists in the actor, in order to make up for the imperfection in the play and in the discourse, reciting what is expected of him. Numerous instances will soon make that conclusion perfectly clear. The tense of the verb employed to express thus the action which takes place at the moment when the actor speaks, is always what is denominated in the Hebrew grammars the preterite.

There is no longer any doubt about these words: "Draw me after thee; let us flee." These words might very well be in the mouth of the odalisque who pronounces the first words: "Let him kiss me. . . ." Nevertheless, as the words which follow, "The king has brought me . . ." are in the mouth of the heroine, I prefer to think that the words which we are now discussing belong to the same person. It is a cry of distress which she directs to him whom she loves. In the scenes which are to follow, we shall see the same heroine taking no account of her surroundings, and speaking to her lover as though she were alone in the world with him.

It may probably occur to the minds of some persons, in pursuing this hypothesis, to place like-

wise the first words, "Let him kiss me," in the mouth of the heroine. But this is hardly admissible; for, first, it is unnatural that the young woman who is shut up in the harem should ask from her lover a kiss before demanding of him her deliverance; besides, the second part of verse 2 is unquestionably uttered by the same person that utters the end of verse 4. Now, this ending of verse 4 is the part which most manifestly appertains to the ladies of the harem.

II. Part Two (I. 5-6) is perfectly clear. A young maiden from the country, doubtless the one who has said in the preceding verse, "The king has brought me to his chambers," makes her entry into the harem. She excuses herself for her features being browned by the sun. Her brothers have maltreated her, and set her to do the roughest work. We perceive that this monologue fits in well with the preceding scene, and that we are still in the harem. The concluding phrase, "*Vineam meam propriam non custodivi,*" presents alone any equivocation. This phrase finds its explanation in another place, VIII. 12. In comparing the two passages, we are convinced that these words must be taken to designate metaphorically that which constitutes the dowry[1] (*bien fonds*) of a young maiden, to wit, her virginity and her beauty. The young maiden chides herself here for some impru-

[1] The word *kérem* (*vinea*) designates here, rent (fermage) of some nature or another.

dence, and, in fact, in chap. VI., verses 11-12, we shall see the narrative of a surprise, which has been the source of her misfortunes, and to which, through her foolhardiness, she had exposed herself.

III. The meaning of Part Three (I. 7-8) presents, unfortunately, a greater number of difficulties. The first verse of this Part shows us a shepherdess (the heroine, doubtless), asking her lover to fix upon a place where they may meet, and we expect the response of the shepherd, which is contained in verse VIII. It is not absolutely impossible that it may not have been so; nevertheless, it must be avowed that such a response would have been not at all natural, since, far from indicating the place for a secret interview, the shepherd, on the contrary, counsels his lover to associate with the other shepherds. Again, in order to obtain this meaning, we are obliged to accept these words אם לא תדעי לך in the sense of "*Si nescis*," which, independently of the extreme listlessness of the meaning which results therefrom, is contrary to the tenor of the poem, in which לא ידע signifies "to act stupidly; to lose one's head" (VI. 12). Finally, the expression, "Oh, thou fairest among women," with which the interlocutor in verse 8 addresses the peasant girl, is the one selected for the occasion when the chorus addresses itself to the heroine. We are hence almost compelled to believe that verse 8 ought to be placed

in the mouth of one of the ladies of the harem, and that verse 7 is pronounced by the peasant girl during a sort of dream, or some kind of distraction. The poor simpleton imagines she is still in the country; a victim of love, and a stranger to the dissimulations of the seraglio, she speaks aloud to a lover whom she has left behind her in the village, and asks of him where he will lead his flock to at noon. One of her companions, or perhaps the entire chorus,[1] shocked at the *naïveté* with which she has betrayed her love, discover to her her imprudence, and engage her, since she is so little mistress of herself, to quit this abode, and to betake herself again to the tending of her flocks. What such a hypothesis may in appearance possess of the fanciful, will soon be explained. We see that the scene thus understood is quite consistent with the preceding scene, and that we have not yet quitted the harem.

IV. Part Four, regarded separately, is very simple. There can be no question that these verses have not been put into the mouth of Solomon. The young peasant girl has received in the seraglio her first trousseau. Solomon sees her, addresses to her a compliment, to which the poet appears to have intentionally given a somewhat awkward turn, and promises her some new finery. We shall still have

[1] In our poem, as in the Greek drama, the rôle of the chorus is at once individual and collective.

to remark more than once that the words put into the mouth of Solomon have a doubtful charm, and are very different from those which are prompted by true love.

V. The short monologue contained in verses 12-14, is by itself sufficiently clear. These three verses evidently proceed from the lips of the *paysanne*. The king is in his divan; the young maiden is full of the thoughts of a lover who is coming to repose between her breasts. That this lover is not the king himself, is made manifest by the clear distinction established on the one hand between the king (*hammélek*), whose absence she regards as a piece of good fortune, and, on the other, the well-beloved (*nirdi, dodi*), whose arrival she is momentarily expecting. The existence of the shepherd, who is the beloved of the young maiden, whom we have already discovered in verse 7, becomes now an absolute certainty. This is a capital point, and the key to the entire poem. We are not so much led into error by the plan of the work as by the fact that sufficient attention has not been given to the capital distinction made in this place, a distinction whence results that Solomon is not the loved object; nay, more, that his absence is the necessary condition to the enjoyment of the loved object.

At verse 15, grave difficulties spring up. One of the two lovers of the young maiden enters upon the scene, and addresses to her a vulgar enough compliment,

which is to be found word for word in chap. IV., verse 1, and which is certainly put into the mouth of Solomon. A similar expression is found in chap. VI., verse 4, and there, too, of a certainty it proceeds from the mouth of Solomon. Moreover, the word which the interlocutor makes use of in addressing himself to the maiden is *raïati*, "my love." This is the word which is used immediately by Solomon (I. 9) and which he uses again in the sequel (IV. 1, VI., 4). Now, it seems that this is an hypothesis much resorted to by the poet in following up a strict rule in the employment of these vocatives, of which the difference serves to mark the change of the interlocutor, and takes the place of the name of the personages.[1]

True it is that *raïati* appears also, II. 10, and V. 2, in the mouth of the lover, but is lost in an enumeration, and attached to other words much more tender. We hold it, then, as indubitable that verse 15 ought to be put into the mouth of Solomon.

Verse 16 belongs assuredly to the *rôle* of the maiden. She responds by taking up again the turn of phrase of the interlocutor in verse 15. It seems then natural to suppose that she addresses Solomon. But to this, two difficulties oppose: 1st, she calls him *dodi*, "my well-beloved," a designation which she always reserves for her lover, whom she has already addressed by this appellation (I. 13, 14), and whom she has formally

[1] This capital principle in the exegesis of the *Song of Songs* has been established by M. Ewald (*Das Hohelied Solomon's*, Gœttingen, 1826).

distinguished from Solomon; 2d, this phrase, "*Lectulus noster viridis*," is but little adapted to a seraglio. It seems that here, as in verse 7, the peasant girl, whose youthful and lively imagination is constantly transported to the country, recalls to her lover the bed of leaves which was a witness to their childish delights. It is at least very probable that this verse is addressed to her lover, and not to Solomon.

Who pronounces verse 17? This is a question upon which many interpretations have been put. Some suggest that this verse, like the one preceding and following, should be put in the mouth of the peasant girl, with the three verses, I. 16, I. 17, II. 4, and form a discourse for the maiden. But these three verses so joined make an incoherent and contradictory *ensemble*. The similies of the *green bed*, *beams of cedar*, *lilies of the valley*, clash with one another in a manner altogether unusual with the poet. It is still less natural to place verse 17 in the mouth of the shepherd who has not yet spoken. We therefore conclude that verse 17 comes from the lips of Solomon. The peasant girl, who dreams only of her vine and her lover, has just recalled the greenwood bed where she first knew love. Solomon, who has no notion of her fidelity, contrasts the greenwood bed with the beams of cedar and the rafters of fir of his seraglio.

We perceive now the singular character of this little scene. Verse 15 and verse 17 proceed from Solomon, verse 16 is in the mouth of the peasant girl; but,

in place of addressing herself to Solomon, the maiden speaks there of her absent lover, whose coming she has been expecting (verses 12-14), or, at least, the thought of whom was occupying her mind. However strange this result may be, it appears to us it ought to be accepted. For to suppose that verse 15 and verse 17 come from the mouth of a real lover, who is expected at verses 12-14, as it is so natural to think, is out of the question. The author, in fact, takes great care in distinguishing the sentiments of his characters, and he could never commit the blunder of putting here into the mouth of a lover, the same words that he puts elsewhere into the mouth of Solomon. And as to saying that the tender protestation of the peasant girl (verse 16) is addressed to Solomon, is in contradiction both with verses 12-14, where the maiden is happy in the absence of the king, and with the entire poem, where the triumph of the shepherdess rightly consists in her having passed through various experiences without having responded in a single word to the love and advances of Solomon.

We have, then, no hesitation in avowing that there is here a sort of bye-play, further examples of which we shall find as we proceed. To the compliments of Solomon, the youthful maiden responds by protesting that the king may, if it seem good to him, take her to himself; but, in reality, she is addressing herself to an absent friend. This friend himself is absent only according to the meaning we attach to the scene.

We see him soon after interposing abruptly, and speaking as if he had heard what had preceded. Further on, other applications of this dramatic method will present themselves to us. We are led to believe that, in representations such as those to which the poem has given scope, all the actors were present at once, and that they took up speech in turn, in fulfilment of their part, on the presumption that the characters not engaged in the scene had not heard them. The Hebrews, in composing dramatic scenes, do not appear to have attained to the idea of the complete drama, where it is essential to place the action before the eyes of the spectator, and where verisimilitude, in its relation to changes of place, ought to be observed.

Verse II. 1, which, by unanimous consent, must be put in the mouth of the shepherdess, has no connection whatever with what precedes and what follows; it takes a singular turn, and one is tempted at times to regard it as a mere *début*, or the beginning of a scene. Nevertheless, the following verses continue very appropriately the scene of verses 15, 16 and 17. We are hence of opinion that the dual dialogue is here still protracted. Solomon has just been boasting of his palace of cedar. The peasant girl, as in verse 16, recurs to her dreams of the country, and protests her innocence in ambiguous terms. If, in adopting this interpretation, the statement in verse 1 is found to be a little dis-

torted, there is no reason why we should not regard it as a couplet of a popular song, which is sung by the shepherdess, in a bantering tone, in order to reveal her presence to her lover. In fact, it is very remarkable that the lover, as though he had recognised in that sign the fidelity of his beloved, enters abruptly upon the scene, which we will prove presently. At verse II. 15, we shall find, without the possibility of a doubt, a similar artifice. Whatever be the exact meaning, we are compelled to see in the verse in question, a continuance of the disagreement which the poet seems to take pleasure in establishing between Solomon and the young maiden, each of them pursuing his or her idea, and (thanks to the ingenious mechanism of the scene) prolonging the misunderstanding.

Verse 2. Is it pronounced by Solomon or by the lover? The word *raïati*, "my friend," leads one to believe that it is by Solomon. But it is only in the apostrophes in the vocative cases that the poet makes use of the distinction in the terms of love. We are tempted, on the contrary, by very strong reasons, to attribute this verse to the lover. Beginning with the following verse (verse 3), it is, in fact, no longer possible for the scene to take place in the absence of the lover, while, at verse 7, his presence is beyond dispute, inasmuch as he speaks. Is it at this point that the new character is introduced? In our opinion, it is at verse 2. The in-

terlocutor, in fact, enters into the feelings of the peasant girl, and continues the rural metaphors of verse 1; contrariwise, each time that the poet brings Solomon on the scene, it is always inopportunely, and represents him as being antagonistic to the sentiments of the young maiden. Whilst Solomon is responding to the *bed of green* by the *beams of cedar*, the interlocutor is carried away in thought to the village. The young women are now called *banoth*, and not *alamoth*, like the odalisques of the seraglio (I. 3; VI. 8). One very characteristic fact is that the actor who pronounces this verse does not speak directly to the young maiden. Indeed, it might be said that the conversation of Solomon with the peasant girl takes place outside of the piece, and that it is abruptly inserted in the dialogue. The action of the scene which we have described, p. 14, seems then to reappear here. And what is not to be gainsaid is the improbability of the lover entering the harem, and making Solomon a witness to his own wrong-doing, since at the end of the scene (verse 7) the lover is undoubtedly present, and speaks. Other portions of the poem show us the same uncertainty in the entrances and exits of the actors. Verse IV. 8, in particular, will show us an entry of the lover on the scene identical with the latter.

Verses 3, 4, 5 and 6 ought, without doubt, to be put in the mouth of the young maiden. The protestations

of love in verse 3 could only be addressed to the lover. The voice of the lover (verse 2) awakens the shepherdess out of her dream, and leads to that eagerness of tone peculiar to one coming out of a swoon. We can even take for granted that, in pronouncing the last words of verse 3, the maiden has thrown herself into the arms of her lover, adhering always to the principle that, in the dramatic arrangement of the poet, each actor announces what he does at the moment he does it. To speak the truth, the whole difficulty turns upon verse 4. How is this passage to be understood? "He brought me into his wine-house, and his banner over me was love." The word "wine-house" seems to signify a cellar above ground, and we are abruptly transported thence into the country. For to admit with Gesenius that this expression designates "the room in which wine is drunk," and that that signifies metaphorically, "he has inebriated me with love," is what a man of judgment will not readily assent to. The female vine-dresser is never used except as a rural figure of speech. The words of verse 5, where the heroine, about to faint away, asks to be comforted with fruit or with a piece of those pressed raisin cakes which are the residuum of the vintage, proves that the scene takes place, or is ascribed to take place, at a spot where the wine is made and stored away. When we compare the passage in question with the very similar passage (I. 4): "The king has brought me to

his chambers," we feel convinced that there is here, again, one of those indications of change of place which the poet (the fault of the scenic machinery) puts in the mouth of the actor. The shepherdess, who has not been able to detach herself in imagination from the village, having refound him whom she loves, gives herself wholly up to the allusion; or, to speak more exactly, the poet, desirous of expressing the triumph of the two lovers, shows them to us, after their separation, reunited at the farm where they first became enamoured of one another. Between verse III. 4 and verse III. 5, we shall find yet another of those passages, which transport us in imagination from Jerusalem to the country. It is evident that, in the mind of the dramatist, the scene is never strictly localised, and that no figure of speech indicates the exterior circumstances in the midst of which the action has taken place.

What follows, up to verse 7, is perfectly clear. The young maiden experiences an amorous fainting-fit, and falls into the arms of the shepherd. The formula which expresses the swooning away is reproduced in two other places in the poem, III. 5 and VIII. 4. In these two places, as in the present instance, the fainting away indicates a very marked division, the end of an act. We are, therefore, justified in forming from the twenty-three verses which we have so far examined, a first act, whose construction is this:—A young female vine-dresser, reared in her native village,

is brought by compulsion into the harem of Solomon. Being a stranger to the whole surroundings, she reserves all her thoughts for a lover whom she has left in the fields. It is in vain that Solomon promises her jewels, and compliments her on her beauty. While the king is absent, she abandons herself to the hope of seeing her lover. She believes that he is about to come. But, instead, it is Solomon who presents himself, and seeks to gain her good graces. Then follows a dialogue, in which the young maiden responds to the compliments of Solomon in significant terms, which in reality are intended for her lover. A phrase, perhaps a couplet of a popular song which the young maiden sings, suddenly brings the lover on the scene. The two lovers are reunited. In imagination both they and the spectators are transported to the country; the lover is supposed to introduce his beloved into the wine room of the farm, where they are recognised, and the young woman faints away in the arms of her lover.

Such a dramatic arrangement, viewed from the standpoint of our modern usages, appears, I admit, somewhat singular; we are astonished, in particular, at finding at the end of the first act the *dénouement* which we did not expect to meet until the end of the drama; but the second act, which we are about to analyse, presents an analogous disposition: and here it is so palpable that the doubts which might still remain as to our deductions will, I hope, dis-

appear when the dramatic method of the author shall, by a second application, have become clear. Let it be observed, however, that the final ending (VII. 12, *et seq.*) sensibly differs from the peculiar endings of the first and second acts. The final ending is indeed realistic, and is accompanied by all the scenic apparatus which befits lovers returning to the village. Here, instead, as well as in the act which immediately follows, the two lovers do not actually leave Jerusalem, and the reunion in the village is represented only in perspective and in imagination.

VI. Part Six (II. 8-17) leaves room for no manner of doubt. The young captive dreams of her lover. She imagines she hears him, and descries him standing behind the window bars. She addresses to him a passionate discourse, and establishes a kind of dialogue between herself and him. The lover is regarded as being outside the seraglio, at the foot of a terraced tower (verse 14); he asks his beloved to let him hear her voice: she responds in a spring lyric, which they had probably sung in the village, and which serves as a token of recognition. She finishes by protesting that she will never belong to any one but her lover, and engages to return to him in the evening. It is all the time doubtful whether this scene ought to be considered as a dream or as a reality. It is equally difficult to say whether, in

the intention of the poet, this scene is a monologue, comprising a dialogue recited by the heroine, or whether the person who enacts the *rôle* of the shepherd ought to pronounce in person verses 10-14. The formula, עָנָה וְאָמַר, "He spake and said unto me," of verse 10, and still more the refrain of verse 16, where the heroine continues her discourse, after having repeated the response which she made to her lover, induces the belief that the amorous dialogue of verses 10-15 is wholly recited by the shepherdess.

VII. Part Seven presents still fewer difficulties than the preceding. The shepherdess awakens during the night, seeks her lover, perambulates the city, encounters him, attaches herself to him. By a turn of expression analogous to that which terminates the first act, the poet suddenly transports us in imagination from Jerusalem to the maternal home of the young maiden, and shows us the shepherdess in a faint. This is decisive. What doubt might remain as to the abrupt passages in verses II. 4, 7, disappears on a comparison with verses III. 4-5. At verse III. 5, there terminates a second act, which is in a manner the counterpart of the first, in respect of the *dénouement*, at least. The design of the author is to show, in each act, the heroine undergoing an experience which terminates in the victory of true love over corruption and constraint, the two essential features

of his method of composition. The changes of place effected in imagination, and the tendency to supply by recitations that which the imperfect dramatic machinery at his disposal was insufficient to do, appear thus in their full light.

VIII. This scene has a character peculiar to itself. The interlocutors are the *bourgeois* of Jerusalem, who form a male chorus. They assist, and we make them assist, at a solemn entry of Solomon into Jerusalem. We see first the *cortége* in the distance, which announces itself by a cloud of perfumes. Then the palanquin of Solomon defiles past, its guard composed of sixty men; its litter contains a new dazzling beauty whom he is taking to his seraglio; and the king himself, with his crown on his head, ready for the ceremony of the marriage. There is no portion of the poem which bears more than this the traces of a realistic representation, and even of a definite scenic mounting, as well as of costumes.

IX. The long Part which follows, comprising the whole of chap. IV. and the first verse of chap. V., forms a very satisfactory continuation, if the principles which we have above been compelled to premise in the two preceding acts are admitted. Most people have taken it for granted that the whole of the amorous tirade which makes up chap. IV., except the last sentences, were uttered by Solomon. On ex-

amining the matter attentively, we see that it is necessary to make a distinction. There can be no doubt at all that the first seven verses are not in the mouth of Solomon; the *mise en scène* of the preceding Part, the formulas of verse 1, and the general tenor of the whole passage, which is more a rhetorical display than an expression of tenderness, proclaims this in a positive manner. But from verse 8 up to the first half of verse 16, inclusive, the tone is entirely different. The interlocutor is much more passionate; he calls the heroine "my espoused sister." Similarly, in verse II. 14, he complains that his "dove" is shut up in a place which to him is inaccessible. He asks her to look on him. Then, as though he had been accorded this favour, he declares that she has ravished his heart; he is firmly convinced of her fidelity, and he praises her virtue as a fountain sealed to every one save himself. It can hardly be doubted, then, that this whole scene ought to be put into the mouth of the lover. The language of verse 6, where Solomon promises himself in the evening the favours of his new spouse, are overheard by the shepherd;[1] he trembles in case his beloved prefers the splendours of the palace of Solomon to the love which she has pledged to him. Making use of an artifice, of which we have already discovered a striking example in the first act, the poet now makes the lover interpose with this eager exclamation: "Come to me. Come to me,

[1] See above, pp. 13, 14.

my spouse!" The shepherdess responds to his voluptuous entreaties with an invitation no less passionate. The lover celebrates his triumph before the chorus, and engages it to be a sharer in his joys.

I will not insist upon an observation which might be taxed with subtlety; I mean, the necessity of making a break after verse 6. Certain it is that verse 7, regarded as the final sentence of Solomon's discourse, is somewhat lugubrious. Expressions similar to that of verse 6, which are to be found in other places (II. 17, III. 4), would ordinarily suggest that the action announced by the future verb was accomplished before the verse which follows: more than this, these kind of verses which imply an amorous hope should always terminate a scene. I am hence led to believe that verse 7, although pronounced, as well as the preceding one, by Solomon, commences another scene; I mean, the interview in the evening, which terminates in a manner so contrary to the hopes of Solomon. This would be a certainty if the Hebrews had had a theatre similar to ours; but the liberties which the poet takes with the verisimilitudes of time and of place ought to make us very circumspect when the question is one of superimposing modern exigencies upon a composition so far removed from our usages.

We see that Parts VIII. and IX., when combined, form a complete act, which is conducted exactly

according to the plan of the two previous acts. The poet, first of all, excites the imagination with the *éclat* of the *cortége* of Solomon. The marriage is in some manner celebrated in advance, so that the triumph of this powerful king over a simple vine-dresser appears certain. Solomon announces that he will return in the evening. At that decisive moment, the voice of the lover makes itself heard, and reawakens the passion of the young maiden; she has no longer any ears except for him, and the shepherd obtains the victory under the very eyes of his rival. The scene does not close this time with a swooning fit, but by the union of the two lovers and the jubilation of the chorus.

And let it not be objected to me that the chorus, which is composed at the commencement of the *bourgeois* of Jerusalem, cannot be the same as that which the lover invites here to share in his rejoicings. The chorus, in the poem, has no distinct identity. It is a neuter-entity, representing in a kind of way the crowd of spectators who give expression to the sentiments which the situation suggests. Let no one accuse me any longer for the circumstance that the scene of Part VIII., in which we show the triumphal entry of Solomon with his new spouse, is anterior in time to the scenes of the preceding acts, which all take place in the harem. This objection would lie if the different acts of the poem were consecutive; that is to say, if each of these took

up the action where the preceding act left it. But it is not so; the acts are in a manner parallel; each of them represents the same idea, we mean the hopes and efforts of Solomon baffled to the advantage of the lover. The third act takes us back a little farther than the two preceding acts, which commence in the harem: this is the whole difference.

X. Part Ten, in regard to its general sense, does not present any confusion. It is the scene of Part VII. more developed. The young maiden starts out of her sleep; she hears the voice of her well-beloved, who is knocking at the door. Yielding to a petty amorous fancy, she makes some difficulty about opening. She opens, finally, but the lover, responding to her "teasing by teasing" her in turn, has disappeared; she goes in search of him, and meets with the same adventures as in Part VII. She encounters the chorus of women, to whom she gives a description of her beloved. Piqued by curiosity at her description, the women of Jerusalem wish to aid her in her search. The response of the young maiden (VI. 2, 3) appears singular, and has made some critics believe that it was owing to a sentiment of jealousy that she refused the services of her female friends. But the principle that we have laid down in verses I. 4, II. 4, V. 1, and numerous instances of which we shall yet discover, to wit, that the actor indicates generally by a verb in the

preterite, the action which, according to our theatrical usages, has taken place at the moment it is uttered, gives us the key to the passage. It is hardly to be doubted that, between verse 1 and verse 2, the meeting of the two lovers has not taken place. The Part ends thus, like the three first acts, and constitutes an act by itself alone.

Here, as in Part VII., the young maiden recites a dialogue which is represented as having taken place between her and her lover, and which, according to the usages of our theatres, must be presented at once; for, although the speech of the lover at verse v. 2 has not preceded ענהואמד, as at verse II. 10, the refrain of verse 4 indicates clearly that it is the young maiden who speaks, and that it is the invitation of the lover and her own response.

XI. Part Eleven presents but few difficulties. That verses VI. 4-7 are in the mouth of Solomon, there can be no doubt. The king commences, as is his habit, with a compliment, which produces little effect upon the heart of the female vine-dresser, inasmuch as her only response to it is cold and fixed eyes. Embarrassed, Solomon begs of her to turn her eyes, and repeats to her the compliment he has made before (Part IX). There is nothing in this which is absolutely opposed to that which has been put into the mouth of Solomon at verses 8-9. Nevertheless, this is far from being natural. Several particulars,

such as the recollection of the young maiden's mother, a recollection that recurs frequently between the two lovers (III. 4, VIII. 1, 5), have no meaning as between her and Solomon. The epithets which the interlocutor applies to the shepherdess are such as affect the lover. The interlocutor speaks of the harem as a stranger would. Finally, the plan of the first and of the third acts seem to be reproduced here. Now the plan requires that, after the speech of Solomon, the lover should intervene, in order to destroy the effect of the words of the king, and as preparatory to his own victory over the heart of his beloved.

Verse 10 is the ordinary formula of the chorus. Having regard always to the unity of the personages, the poet insists, as in verses III. 6, VIII. 5, upon the principal circumstance of the scene, which is here the obstinate determination of the lover, who is resolved not to yield. This formula is made use of in other places (Parts VIII. and XIV.) of the work, and is, so to speak, the rising of the curtain; but, seen as it is here, joined to the final words of verse 9, it would be better to regard it this time, at least provisionally, as a scenic close. We shall show presently that the scene of Part XII. is designed to follow immediately the scene of Part XI. The question of knowing to what scene verse 10 belongs becomes now almost purposeless.

XII. It is here that the sequence of the poem

presents the greatest difficulties. We have just left the shepherdess victorious over the blandishments of Solomon; we expect the proof of it to follow in the ordinary finale—that is to say, the ardent expression of the happiness of the two lovers, reunited. There is nothing of the kind. At verse 11 we find in the scene a young maiden who has left the house of her mother, in order to go and enjoy herself among the plants and the flowers of the valley. The scene would now seem to be removed from Jerusalem. At verse 12 the young simpleton finds herself transported, without her knowing it, into the midst of a princely suite, which is unquestionably the suite of Solomon. In Hebrew the indecision as to the tense prevents us from determining at first sight whether this is the recital of an action which has taken place long before, or the enunciation of a fact which is intended should take place in the view of the spectator. In the first portion of verse VII. 1, some one calls out to the young maiden to return or to turn round (the word in Hebrew may be construed in both senses), which evidently implies that the young maiden, after pronouncing verse 12, either makes a pretence to flee, or stands with her back turned. Hence the interpretation which one adopts as to this verse depends wholly upon the meaning of the scene. If the former is adopted, the scene must evidently be placed in the country, and assumes that it is the people of the *cortége*, who, seeing a

young peasant girl confused and frightened, recall her to her senses (*pour la regarder*). If, on the contrary, we adopt the latter, the scene takes place in the harem, and it is the wives of Solomon who pronounce verse VIII. 1. The former sense, certainly, appears at first the more natural. And such is the singular structure of the poem, that those kinds of *retours* do not contain any element of improbability; and the scene in Part VII., which is evidently anterior to those which precede, is the proof of this. But we must next assume that Part XI. is a complete act in itself, which is opposed to the whole economy of the poem.[1] In point of fact, each act terminates with the reunion of the two lovers. We have not, however, witnessed resistance on the part of the young maiden at verse 10. It is necessary to assume, further, that Part XII. happens in the country, previous to the principal action, and Part XIII. occurs at Jerusalem, at the moment of departure; and being at the close of the action form a single act, which is simply impossible. It cannot, then, be admitted that a scene, happening in the country, has been mortised into that place in the poem. One is, in a manner, led to think that Part XII. forms

[1] In order to escape from this difficulty, I have for long considered that the whole scene of Part XII. ought to be transferred to the commencement of the poem. But the principle guiding transpositions ought only to be admitted in evident cases, and such a principle being seldom resorted to in the criticism of Hebrew writings, I have renounced such desperate means of getting rid of the embarrassment.

a second scene of the act commenced by Part XI.—that Part XI. going back, as is the habit with the poet, to the *début* of the action, and even further than any of the preceding acts, shows us the first efforts made by Solomon to overcome a young maiden whom his servants are about to carry off, and who resists fiercely; that verses VI. 11-12 are pronounced as a sort of *aside*, the shepherdess, newly introduced into the seraglio, turning her back upon the company, and refusing to look at anything; that, at verse VII. 1, finally, the women of the harem seek to quiet her, and induce her to let them look at her.

There is a word in verse VIII. 1 which strikes us. The persons who recall the young maiden are termed *hassulammith*. This word is not a proper name, for it is preceded by the article. The name of *Shulammith* hence signifies "a young maiden of *Shulam*." *Shulam*, or *Shunam*, was a village belonging to the tribe of Issachar, the country of a certain Abishag the Shunammite, whose adventures, related at I. (Vulg. III.) Reg. I., 3, II. 17, *et seq.*, are not without some analogy to those which form the ground-work of the poem. We read, in fact, at the first of the passages cited, that the people of David, in circumstances too far removed from our modern manners to be reproduced here, caused a search to be made in all the tribes of Israel for the most beautiful young virgin, and that that virgin was Abishag the Shunammite. This Abishag, on the decease of David, was trans-

ferred to the harem of Solomon, but she had inspired such a passion in the breast of Adonijah, another son of David, that the latter had the temerity to make an indiscreet demand for her hand from Solomon, which was the cause of or the pretext for his death. Whatever be the resemblance, it is certain that the two verses and a half, which we have just been analysing, throw a singular light upon the fable which forms the subject of the poem. In the first place, the scenic name of the young maiden is given us. In the second place, we know how the young maiden, whom we have formerly seen shut up in the harem, was brought there. It was a young peasant girl of Shulam who, as she was walking about one day among the flowers, was captured by a party of Solomon's people.

The second half of verse VII. 1 is, unfortunately, a great stumbling-block, and has never been interpreted in a manner to gain the positive assent of critics. The first words, "*Quid intuemini Sulammitidem?*" or "*Quid vultis intueri Sulammitidem?*" seem to respond to these words of the women of the harem, "*ut intueamur te.*" But if we place them in the mouth of the Shulammite, we obtain a sense not at all natural, and an unusual turn of expression. This manner of speaking of her, in order to designate her by name, is exceedingly clumsy. But, above all, how are the concluding words of the verse, כמחלת המהנים to be understood? This passage is one of those where the lack of

grammatical precision in the Hebrew, causes the greatest embarrassment to the philologist. Let us put to one side the difficulty contained in the word Mahanaïm, which is only a matter of detail.[1] Who utters these two last words? What is the meaning of these dances to which it would appear the Shulammite is compared? What bond is established between all these ideas, which jar with one another? How are we to link them on to the grand descriptions of verses 2-10? Before answering these questions, it is of moment to subject the description contained in verses 2-10 to a searching examination.

In short, this description, or, rather, this dithyrambus, in praise of a woman, is distinguished from the analogous parts which precede, by some essential features. Everything goes to show that the young maiden referred to in these verses executes a dance while she is being praised. "How beautiful are thy feet," is by itself almost conclusive of this. The

[1] Some translate this word by "Choirs of angels;" others regard it as the city of Mahanaïm, situated near the confines of Gad and Mannasāh. At bottom, these two interpretations differ in little if we read chap. XXXII. of Genesis. The name of the city of Mahanaïm is there associated with a group of angels or of *elohim*, which Jacob encountered in that place. The word in question signifies *duo castra*, and may designate two groups of dancers executing some figures, facing each other. It is probable that the city of Mahanaïm had been the centre of some non-Israelitish cult, and was still celebrated for its dancing girls. Did the author of the *Song of Songs* believe it to be the city of Mahanaïm, or did he consider it as a common noun (*duo. chori*), the very word from which the city of Mahanaïm has derived its name? This is a question which is very difficult to decide.

remark which has been made by critics, to wit, that the other descriptions proceed *a capite ad calcem*, whilst the latter proceeds *a calce ad caput*, is, put in such form, simply childish. In short, the similarity of the last words of the verse proves that the dance, at this moment, is an important circumstance in the poem. This premised, two questions present themselves; First, In whose mouth should this Part be placed? Second, Who is the woman who dances, or, in other words, to whom are verses 2-10 addressed?

The first question need only detain us for a short time. Verses 9-10, uttered with the tone of a master, imply such a positive confidence of possession, that they could only proceed from Solomon.[1] The chorus, collectively, might well pronounce verses 2-8, but verses 9-10 do not fit in with it at all. The chorus, moreover, hardly ever intervenes, except by short exclamations, of a character easily recognisable. As to the second question, that of discovering the person to whom these verses are addressed, is a subject of very great difficulty.

[1] I agree with Ammon, Ewald, Hitzig, that we must suppress in verse 10 the word לדודי, which has no meaning there. The word לדודי, recurring at a distance of twenty-three letters, that is to say, at almost the next line, we may assume that this word commenced a line in the manuscript, from which all the others proceeded. The copyist must at first have made the mistake of a line, then, perceiving his error, he marks the word לדודי as a sign of *deleatur*. The copyists following him have not taken into account these marks.

Many interpreters have thought that the young maiden who dances is the Shulammite. Dividing verse 1 into three parts, they translate it thus, or nearly so: "Return, return, oh! Shulammite, that we may behold thee!—What will ye see in the Shulammite?—A Mahanaïm dance." Yielding to the invitation addressed to her, the Shulammite executes a dance, during which the compliments contained in verses 2-10 are addressed to her. Let us put out of sight for a moment the repugnance that one experiences in putting into the mouth of the Shulammite the clause of a sentence in which she refers to herself. Even so, enormous difficulties spring up against such an interpretation. And, first, it is grammatically untenable. The particle ב which follows the verb חזה in two clauses of consecutive phrases, mark in the former an accusative case. In the latter, it is impossible that it should not have the same value. M. Hitzig has acknowledged this with perfect frankness. It is indubitable that it must be translated by the accusative: "*Cur intuemini Sulammitidem?*" or "*Cur vultis intueri Sulammitidem?*" But this is the least of the objections which may be brought against the opinion which we combat. It implies so many incongruities, that we are surprised that men of judgment have been puzzled by it. What! that a timid, reserved, peasant girl, such as the poet is anxious to hold up to us as a model of fidelity, who, losing her wits in the court of Solomon, seeks only

to flee or conceal herself, should become so suddenly emboldened that, on the first asking, she dances in such manner as to merit the praises which could belong only to a nautch girl! The first compliment of Solomon to a poor girl, who had been engaged in attending vineyards, would be to ask for his slippers! How can we suppose that the poet, who elsewhere gives proof of so just a taste, has forgotten himself at this point? Let us add,—1st, that the king calls the *danseuse bath nadib,* "prince's daughter," which words, addressed to a peasant girl, would be absurd, the rather when they are to be found two verses above applied to the people of Solomon's *cortége;* 2d, that Solomon had been for a long time acquainted with the woman to whom he speaks, seeing that he boasts of her hidden charms (VII. 7); 3d, and, finally, that the compliments addressed to the Shulammite in the other portions of the poem are of an absolutely different character from those which we read here. The passage which we are now discussing is the only one in which Oriental sensuality is given full swing, and one which the translator was obliged to tone down. It is impossible to admit that Solomon, seeing for the first time the young shepherdess, held language to her which was only fitting to be addressed to a prostitute, and which forms so striking a contrast to that which he has elsewhere addressed to her.

Only one hypothesis is then possible, and that is, that verses 2-10 are addressed to a dancing girl of

Solomon's seraglio. It seems that here the poet wishes to contrast, like as he has already done in Part I., the sensual manners and the licentious love of the seraglio with the innocent manners and the sincere love of his rustic heroine. I am disposed to see in that scene, as well as in Part XV., which we shall analyse presently, a sort of contrast designed to set off the tender and strong passion of the other scenes. Perhaps, too, a slight pretext served the author, like that which has a place in our operas, to introduce a ballet. Several scenes, indeed, in the poem would appear to be conceived with a view to furnishing *motifs* for the nuptial festivities. In this relation, Part VII. presents a great similarity to that now under consideration.

Such an explanation being admitted as the least improbable which is compatible with the *bizarre* monologue of verses 2-10, we must go back to the last words of verse 1, which serve as its introduction, and the significance of which we have, up to this point, left in abeyance. Entertaining an invincible repugnance to putting a phrase, in which the Shulammite is named, into the mouth of the Shulammite herself, I am led to believe that it is necessary to place all the second half of verse 1 in the mouth of a woman of Solomon's harem, probably in that of the dancing girl praised in verses 2-10. The women of the harem have just requested the Shulammite to turn towards them, in order that they might judge of her beauty.

The dancing girl interrupts in order to oppose to the charms of the peasant girl those of her own, which she believes to be superior. "How can you," she says, "pay any attention to a Shulammite in presence of charms like mine?" which leads up to the *divertissement* of verses 2-10. The definition which must be ascribed to the particle כ in order to obtain this sense, will not surprise Hebraists who are willing to have recourse to the examples cited by Gesenuis (*Thes.* p. 649, B. 3.), and, above all, to the passage in Isaiah XVIII. 4, 5.

As if chance itself took delight in accumulating difficulties in that part of the poem, verse 11 again gives occasion for a certain amount of doubt. M. Hitzig places this verse in the mouth of the *danseuse.* According to him, the poet would thus oppose the condescension of the women of the harem to the fidelity of the peasant girl. The phrase תשוקתו seems to him a voluptuous phrase, which is not in keeping with the *rôle* of the Shulammite. But the words לדודי, "to my well-beloved," applied to Solomon in the mouth of the *danseuse,* is still much more incongruous than the words תשוקתו in the mouth of the Shulammite. We are of opinion, then, that the phrase דודי is applied here, as throughout the poem, to the lover, that, consequently, this verse belongs to the Shulammite, and that we are forced to regard it as a protestation of fidelity analogous to those which terminate several other scenes. The bold tone of verses

9-10 excites only amongst the village people a sentiment of disgust; she hugs the memory of her lover, and is consoled by thinking that he, in turn, reserves for her all his thoughts and desires.

Let any one examine the whole of these interpretations, and he will not, I believe, find one of them more natural to the text than the one we have just analysed. Solomon has just delivered, in Part XI., a first assault on the virtue of the shepherdess;[1] the Shulammite has responded to it only by obstinate looks, which strike the chorus with astonishment. The heroine, as in Parts I., II., III., is placed face to face with the women of the harem: thrown into this, to her, new world, she opens her mouth only to protest that she will remain faithful to her lover. The dramatic arrangement of the author, which consists in completing the acts, the one by the other, rather than by exhibiting them to us in their natural order, is thus once more demonstrated. The spectator, indeed, knew the fable beforehand, and that which he sought for in these spectacles is less surprises and peripatetics than passionate developments and some snatches of music. This is the reason why the heroine is only named at so late a stage. This is also how it happens, that Part VIII., in which we witness Solomon re-entering Jerusalem after an expedition

[1] We must always remember that each act takes us back to the *début*, and what we are now considering in particular, is that which takes us back furtherest, since it all but makes us assist at the abduction of the young maiden.

which has resulted in capturing a new beauty for his seraglio, is only explained by Part XII., in which we assist in the love-hunting expedition of which Part VIII. shows us the return.[1]

XIII. This charming scene is happily as clear as the preceding is obscure. The overpowering desire for the country again seizes the Shulammite; she beseeches her lover to restore her to the village, to her mother's house, near to which their love had its origin. To this tender effusion succeeds, as in Parts V. and VII., a fainting away into the arms of her lover. This swooning is the ordinary formula that marks the close of the acts, and it seems at first sight that the act which we are discussing ought to terminate here. The Shulammite, in fact, has just overcome a trial which is to be the last of the series in the poem, a voluptuous scene of which she has been a witness tends only to fortify her in her virtue. The prize of the victory is, as in the other acts, the reunion of the two lovers. Only, before this reunion is made definitive, the poet has qualms of conscience in regard to allowing her to return to her rough toil in the

[1] M. Ewald has clearly recognised that the gravamen of the scene we are now discussing is the first *rencontre* of the Shulammite and Solomon. Only a learned Hebraist would think of placing the entire scene in the form of a recital in the mouth of the Shulammite. This hypothesis, which M. Ewald applies in other places, and the result of which is the putting of the entire dialogues of two or three persons into the mouth of a single actor, occasions complicated and most unnatural scenic arrangements.

village. The Shulammite then postpones the final pledges of her love until the day on which her beloved shall return to Shulam.

XIV. Here, again, there can be no doubt as to the march of the poem. The scene commences with the accustomed salutation of the chorus, modified to suit the circumstances. The Shulammite crosses the stage, supported by her dearly-beloved. She is asleep, as is proved by the first words of the second part of the verse. While she is asleep, the lover is supposed to transport her to the village. We have already observed changes of place brought about as instantaneously, and in as wholly unconventional a manner. The lover disposes his sleeping beauty under an apple tree in the vineyard, and awakens her to point out the spot where she was born. The Shulammite (verse 6) resigns herself to him, and rejoices in the invincible power of love. Verse 7 is a *resumé* of the whole piece. "Nothing can quench true love; to offer to purchase it with gold" (as Solomon does) "is only to expose one's self to reproach." It is not impossible that this verse likewise proceeds from the mouth of the Shulammite. Nevertheless, there is something objectionable in the speech of the maiden, at the moment of the fulfilment of her desires, when she sets herself to moralising and to pointing epigrams at Solomon. Verse 6 makes an excellent close to the *rôle* of the Shulammite. The admirable art and the

exquisite taste to be remarked in these two last scenes, interdict us from believing that the poet had committed the blunder of putting the abstract formula of his drama into the mouth of the heroine. We assume, then, that verse 7 is spoken by a person, a stranger to the action, by a sort of moralist, or choragus, or perhaps by the chorus. However it may be with this unimportant detail, it is evident—1st, that the end of the act occurs at Shulam; and 2d, that the piece, properly speaking, finishes at verse 7. Not only, indeed, is the action terminated by the oath taken by the two lovers, but also by the moral having been drawn in such an explicit manner; still, we experience some surprise in seeing the poem prolonged beyond the scene with which we have just been occupied.

XV. Our surprise increases when we study the verses thus placed as a sort of appendix to the final act. The scene of these verses is at Shulam; but at first sight it seems impossible to give any meaning, after the conclusion of verse 7, to the action which takes place there. The hypothesis advanced by several exegetes that it is some new snares laid by her brothers for the Shulammite, is opposed to the text, and ascribes to the poet inconceivable stupidity. What! that when the action is closed, he should begin another action, not to develop it, but to introduce a dry and insignificant dialogue of four or five lines! When we seriously reflect upon the difficulties of this singular

part, we cease to regard as strange the opinion of Umbreit, who considers that the epilogue in question had no manner of connection with the poem, and that, in fair criticism, it ought to be suppressed. We believe, nevertheless, that a minute analysis of the passage will show us that it is too closely interwoven with the general action of the poem to be struck out in such an arbitrary manner.

Verse 8 is perfectly clear. The brothers and a young sister, who has not yet reached a marriageable age, have a conversation together, and the question is, what shall be done with her on the day when people begin to seek after her. At verse 9 one of her brothers makes an equivocal answer, which, by many interpreters, is explained thus:—"If she be still irreproachable, we shall reward her: if she have shown weakness, we shall shut her up." But this interpretation opens the door to grave difficulties. I do not insist upon the point that she has become dejected and languid. Let us admit, in face of all probability, that the battlement of silver spoken of by the brothers is intended to designate a sort of jewel which the young maiden has received as a recompense for her virtue. There yet remains one point, the signification of which is an enigma. If the brothers are desirous of punishing their sister in the event of her having committed a fault, why do they threaten to enclose her with panels of cedar? It is apparent that this circumstance implies an idea

of wealth and of luxury. *Battlements of silver, panels of cedar*, is the response. Neither of these alternatives connotes an idea of punishment or recompense. If they both comprise the idea of vigilance and of great care, of some sort, they must be interpreted thus:—"If our sister is virtuous, let us guard her well; if she is frail, let us guard her still more." This cannot be. In short, if she is virtuous, why enclose her with walls of silver? Why these precautions (which, in the mind of the poet, are imperative) of *cedar and silver?* Is it natural, again, to suppose that the brothers of the heroine should constitute themselves the jealous guardians of her virtue, when we read elsewhere (I. 6) that they are her enemies, that they hate her, and that, so far from confining her, they have made her pass her life in the open air?[1] Everything, then, induces the belief that the thought expressed in verses 8-9 is not a benevolent thought. We believe that, in these verses, the brothers of the Shulammite announce their intention of trying to profit by the beauty of their sister, and of selling her to some harem. These figures of battlements of silver and panels of cedar designate, in their minds, the luxury of the seraglio, or, mayhap,

[1] The idea of representing the young maiden as a little orphan and outcast pervades the whole poem. The question is often as to her mother, but never as to her father. I know that, in the manners of polygamous Orientals, the child is much more closely drawn to the mother than to the father. Nevertheless, in Psalm XLV., so like our poem, it is the *house of her father* that the *fiancée* abandons to go to join her future spouse.

the silver which they hoped to receive as the reward of their evil action. Two distinct shades of meaning, at least, appear to us as certainly implied in this little dialogue. These are, on the one hand, the desire of being relieved from the surveillance of their sister; on the other, a selfish desire which would lead them to disengage themselves of that surveillance in a manner advantageous to their avarice.

These two verses seem to refer us, as in verses VI., 11-12, to a period anterior to the abduction, a period when the heroine of the poem was still a little peasant girl at Shulam. But verse 10 assumes, on the contrary, that the Shulammite, at the time of which we are now speaking, has crossed the threshold of the harem. This verse, in fact, undoubtedly proceeds from the lips of the Shulammite. She interposes, in the dialogue between her brothers that she is presumed to have heard, and replies to the alternative they have posited. She is as a wall (that is to say, her virtue is unassailable), her breasts are as towers (which no one has been able to capture). The literal interpretation presents no difficulty. But the shade of meaning she wishes, in veiled language, to convey, is difficult to seize, and depends upon the meaning which is given to the words which follow,—'*Tunc fui oculis ejus sicut inveniens pacem.*" These words have caused interpreters to despair. Taken with verse VII., 1, they comprise the *nodus* of the difficulties of the *Canticle.* Without entering here into a

discussion of all the hypotheses which have been proposed, let us say that, after much hesitation, one only appears to us as tenable, namely, the one which ascribes the pronoun *ejus* to Solomon. The brothers have just given expression to their concern as touching the virtue of their sister. The sister suddenly enters upon the scene, and declares to them that her virtue is unshaken, and that, thanks to her firmness, she has obtained leave from Solomon to depart in peace. All my efforts to escape from such a conclusion have been of no avail.[1] The second member of verse 10, and, in particular the particle אָז "then," which recalls to our mind a past adventure, has driven me to adopt this sense, let the objections raised against it be what they may.

These objections can all be pointed out at once. Solomon does not figure, directly or indirectly, in the place where the scene of the poem, at the point we have at present in view, is laid. How can the author designate him by a simple personal pronoun? Again, if the Shulammite, at the moment we are now

[1] For a long time I believed that the whole epilogue VIII. 8-14 ought to be transposed, and that we must recognise in it a prologue designed to point out to us that the parents of the Shulammite were ready to make merchandise of her beauty. This hypothesis, which is almost that of Velthusen, might very well be applied to verses 8-9, but not so appropriately to verses 11-12; much reflection, however, on verse 10 has forced me to abandon this idea. The transposition of the whole of chap. VIII. recently proposed by M. Blaubach (*Das Hohe Lied*, Berlin, 1855) is to no purpose, and but serves to augment the difficulties.

discussing, has made the grand adventure of the harem, how could her brothers speak of her in verse 8 as a young woman who had not yet reached the age of puberty, and upon whose fate her relations were deliberating? Two solutions might be put forward to obviate these difficulties, and, first, we can say that the brothers of the Shulammite did not know of her abduction and of her enforced sojourn in the harem. They believed she was in the country attending to the vines, and they speak of her future lot as if nothing extraordinary had taken place. We cannot, it is true, very well make out how by this hypothesis the Shulammite, when speaking to them of her adventure, merely alludes to it, and designates her seducer by a simple personal pronoun, which would induce the belief that the latter was known of them all. But it is necessary to remember that scenic probabilities are not, in our poem, rigidly observed. It is much more with a view to please the public than her brothers that the Shulammite interposes. What she desires is much less to give a clear account of her adventure than to affirm her victory and to insist, conformably with the idea in verse 7, upon the discomfiture of Solomon. M. Ewald has proposed another solution. In his view, the dialogue of the brothers should be pronounced by the Shulammite. He founds this upon the analogies of Parts VI., VII., X., where the Shulammite recounts the conversations which, according to our usages, ought to be re-

cited almost immediately by the other actors, and assumes that the Shulammite, overwhelmed with joy and proud of her triumph, repeats herself the words of her brothers, stamped with defiance and ill-will, in order to jeer at and to oppose to them, at verse 10, a kind of challenge. But in Parts VI., VII., X., the passages quoted are woven into a recital which determines its sense. Here, on the contrary, the citation made by the Shulammite would embrace something which was too unnatural. It is imperative that there should be placed at the head of verse 8: אמרו בני אמי, "the sons of my mother have said. . . ."

It is difficult to pronounce between these diverse meanings. With the extreme latitude of the author's dramatic method, with the liberty he avails himself of, in taking little account of neither time nor place, it is not impossible that, in order to show the assurance of the Shulammite he should make the discourse, which he gives to the heroine, precede the retrospective dialogue between the brothers—a dialogue which is destitute of meaning at the point in the poem at which we have now arrived, but which shows clearly the idea which is designed to be put in relief. Verses VI., 11-12, are, indeed, also of a retrospective character at the place in the poem where they are inserted.

We are of opinion, then, that all this Part, as far as verse 8, ought to be considered as an epilogue, de-

signed, not to complete the action (the latter finishes at verse 7), but to show the dangers with which the poor girl was threatened, and to hurl a last shaft at Solomon. Verses 11-12, under this supposition, have received a very natural explanation. Almost all the interpreters, in fact, are at one as to putting these two verses in the mouth of the Shulammite.[1] "Solomon," says she, "has vineyards which are esteemed very highly by the keepers; as for me, I have my beauty and my virginity, which are my vineyard, and which I have known how to protect." She finishes with an ironical apostrophe addressed directly to Solomon. Solomon is not supposed to be present during the scene; nevertheless, as all the actors, in our opinion, would figure at once on the estrade, the epigram would strike him full in the breast, which, it it is true, is opposed to all probability, but would doubtless be received with great applause by the lookers-on.

XVI. These two verses form by themselves alone a short scene, very clear in itself, but which, in the place we find it, causes us some surprise. At verse 13, we see a young man, accompanied by youths from the village, at the end of a pavilion situated at the

[1] I had for long the idea that verses 11-12 proceeded from the mouth of a brother or an uncle of the Shulammite, who dreams of paying his rent by the bestowing of the young maiden on the harem of Solomon. But, by adopting this hypothesis, the *ensemble* of the scene would be exposed to too many grave objections.

bottom of the garden. He calls to his well-beloved, and asks her to let him hear her voice. At verse 14, the well-beloved responds, and begs of the young man to listen. It is evident that the young man is the lover of the Shulammite, and the young people are his paranymphs, or village companions. The lovers are mutually pledged (VIII. 6). Preparations are now made for the marriage, and the whole village becomes interested in the doings of the shepherd. There is here, doubtless, some allusion to those usages which are still to be found in the countries in which ancient manners have been conserved, and which consist in imposing upon the *fiancés* a series of first of April quests, and attempts at deception. The response in which the Shulammite engages her lover to take flight, can only be accepted as a mere pleasantry. In a word, this verse is superimposed upon verse II. 17, where the captive lover invites, in similar terms, the shepherd to return. We feel, moreover, that the whole of this appendix, from verse 8, is only of secondary importance. It is probable that it will come to be regarded as hardly forming any part of the poem, and that it will be omitted in the majority of representations.

The consequences to be drawn from the preceding analysis lead us to divide the *Song of Songs* into five complete acts, plus an epilogue, which may be detached from the poem at will.

The 1st Act extends from	I. 2	to	II. 7.
The 2d „ „	II. 8	to	III. 5.
The 3d „ „	III. 6	to	V. 1.
The 4th „ „	V. 2	to	VI. 3.
The 5th „ „	VI. 4	to	VIII. 7.
The Epilogue „	VIII. 8	to	VIII. 14.

Another consequence which results from our examination is, that it is not necessary to suppose, although several exegetes[1] have done so, that the text of the *Canticle* has suffered from transpositions, nor that some parts of it have been lost. The end of the poem is abrupt, and bears little resemblance to our usages. It may be that the closing verses were made use of to introduce new developments. But, in the body of the poem, no essential *lacune* is discoverable; while as to transpositions, if there are some which have the appearance of probability, there are none which betray evidence sufficient to necessitate a modification of the text which the Hebrew manuscripts, conforming to the most ancient versions, have transmitted to us.

In applying to this ancient poem the usages of our modern theatres, we are thus warranted in presenting a list of the characters, as well as an analysis of the several parts of which it is composed, as follows:—

[1] The system which M. P. Macpherson has recently developed, under the title *Cantici Canticorum structura architectonica* (Berlin, 1857), and according to which the *Canticle* ought to be written in columns similar to those employed on the inscriptions of the Alhambra, is a mere fancy which has no serious foundation in fact.

PERSONÆ.

THE SHULAMMITE, *a young maiden of the village of Shulam, of the tribe of Issachar.*

A SHEPHERD, *the lover of the Shulammite.*

KING SOLOMON.

BROTHERS OF THE SHULAMMITE.

LADIES OF THE HAREM OF SOLOMON.

WOMEN OF JERUSALEM.

CITIZENS OF JERUSALEM.

MEMBERS OF THE SUITE OF SOLOMON. } mute personages.
PARANYMPHS OF THE SHEPHERD. }

THE CHORUS.

SAGE drawing the moral from the poem.

ACT I.

Scene I. The poet introduces us to the harem of Solomon, and shows us the ardour of the venal and sensual love which surrounds the master. The Shulammite, a young orphan, abducted from her native village by a party of Solomon's retainers, who scour the tribes of the north in order to supply the seraglio of Solomon at Jerusalem, is introduced, and utters a few words, which show her *naïveté*.—Scene II. Ignorant of the dissimulations of the seraglio, and a stranger to that which is passing around her, the young maiden addresses herself to an absent friend. An odalisque recalls her to reason. Solomon makes her a first compliment, and promises her jewelry.—Scene III. The Shulammite, during the absence of Solomon, dreams of her lover, and believes he is about to arrive, when

Solomon enters. The Shulammite resists his flattery, and responds in affectionate terms, which have reference only to her lover. The lover suddenly enters on the scene. The Shulammite, overwhelmed, is, or believes herself to be, transported to the village, and falls swooning into the arms of her lover.

Act II.

Scene I. The Shulammite hears, or believes she hears, the voice of her well-beloved, who hastens to her, and invites her to return to the village. She engages to return in the evening.—Scene II. In the evening, she seeks her well-beloved; not finding him, she sets out to perambulate the city in order to find him. She is represented as meeting him, and returning with him to her mother's house. She swoons away in his arms.

Act III.

Scene I. Solemn entry of Solomon into Jerusalem, bringing with him the Shulammite that he is going to espouse.—Scene II. Solomon addresses to the Shulammite the most pressing flatteries, and promises himself that in the evening he will enjoy her favours. The lover, supposed to be at the end of the pavilion, recalls the Shulammite to fidelity. He is reassured by a look from the young maiden. The Shulammite invites him to enter. The lover enters, and, with the chorus, celebrates his triumph.

Act IV.

A single Scene. The Shulammite, while asleep, hears, or believes she hears, her lover knocking, and calls to him. She delays a moment in opening. The lover has disappeared. The Shulammite goes in search of him. She encounters the night watchmen, who maltreat her; then the chorus of women, whom she invites to assist her in seeking for her lover. She gives them her lover's signal. But the moment when they are about to begin the search with the young maiden, she encounters her lover, and throws herself into his arms.

Act V.

Scene I. Solomon attempts to overcome the obstinacy of the Shulammite. The voice of the lover makes itself heard, and triumphs again.—Scene II. The Shulammite recounts how that, in the morning, when she was taking a walk amongst the shrubs of the valley, she was surprised by Solomon's servants. The women of the harem endeavour to mollify her. She is a witness to voluptuous dances, and, learning their design, which, far from seducing her, serve only to make her cling more closely to the memory of her lover.—Scene III. The Shulammite, victorious over all temptations, supplicates her lover to carry her back to the village; there she will give him the highest pledges of her love. She falls fainting into the arms of her lover, who transports her, asleep, to the village of Shulam.—Scene IV. The lover disposes his sleeping burden

under the apple tree of the farm on which she was born, and awakens her. They swear eternal fidelity to one another. A personage, a sort of chorister, interposes, in order to extract a moral from the piece.

Epilogue.

The brothers of the Shulammite, who are ignorant of the adventure, hold a consultation among themselves as to what should be done about their sister. The Shulammite interposes, mocks at their useless precautions, declares that she has known, and shall know, how to take care of herself, and hurls disdainful defiance at all the wealth of Solomon. Meanwhile, the voice of the shepherd, who has arrived with his paranymphs, is heard. The young maiden again adjures him to confide in her.

II.

THE plan and the method pursued in the composition of the *Song of Songs* must now appear, if I am not mistaken, in their true light. If we take the term *dramatic poetry* in its widest sense to designate a composition in dialogue form with its corresponding action, the *Song of Songs* is a drama. But it is useless to set forth again how much this drama lacks, not only of that which the moderns, but also the Greeks, the Romans, and the Hindoos have considered as the essence of stage poetry. The theatre of the Greeks, Latins, and Hindoos is a complete theatre, possessing actors, who, at a very early period, succeeded in making a profession of their art. With all these peoples, the estrade is erected in public or in some spacious buildings; the actors have their entries and exits; scenery, however imperfect, guides the attention of the spectator; finally, the scene is always laid in a fixed place, and probability is respected up to a certain point. It is not so in the *Song of Songs:* in it changes of place are made instantly, and in such manner that no mechanism could indicate them; the characters enter upon the

scene in a fashion contrary to all probability: the contexture of the poem proves that the actors recite, sing, and declaim, but that they *act* very little. The passages I. 4, II. 4, V. 1, VI. 2, VIII. 5, would otherwise be destitute of meaning. In all these passages, in fact, the actor recites that which is supposed to be set down for him; such indications would be manifestly absurd if the actor had acted at the same time as he spoke. The same remark applies to Parts VI., VII., X., which are narrative rather than dramatic, and in which a character not only recounts the fact which, with us, would be placed before the eyes of the spectator, but also repeats the words appertaining to other actors. M. Ewald has pressed this principle too far in admitting that some entire scenes and dialogues are so recited by a single person; yet it is certain that, in the three parts above cited, the poem almost ceases to be dramatic, and falls into romance or song.

The absence of mountings is not less clearly shown in the passages above cited, and above all by the abrupt changes of place, which assume that it is never localised by any exterior signs. When we seek to represent to ourselves the circumstances in which this singular drama is enacted, we are led to conceive of an area or arena where three principal actors figure—the shepherd, the shepherdess, and the king. The shepherdess is placed between the king and the shepherd, and receives in turn their homage. These

actors are always present, even at the moment when the exigencies of the scene require that they should be out of view. The actors express by their gestures and their facial expression the sentiments which animate them (bear witness, Part XI.). The meetings, and on one occasion (IV. 16, V. 1) even the kissing of the two lovers, the fainting fits of the shepherdess, the falling into the arms of her lover, the transporting of the sleeping shepherdess, supported by her well-beloved (VIII. 5), and some other instances of a similar kind, were in reality represented, as is proved by the exclamations of the chorus or by indications more clear still; but, in the detail, no care is taken to present to the eye an action which is at once complete and possible. Behind the three principal actors, or standing around them, there must have been ranged the secondary characters forming two choirs, the one composed of men, the other of women, who intervened in the piece with reflections appropriate to the circumstances, and executed at times some evolutions, as is proved by the ceremony of Part VIII. The scene of Part XIII., in fine, supposes dances and *divertissements* analogous to our ballets. Some portions were doubtless chanted; in the formulas of the fainting fits, and in the ingenious rhythm of some passages (the first half of verse VII. 1, for example), one feels even, if I may say so, the modulations which accompany the voice of the actors. A single reading, on the other hand, suffices to show the difference between solo

lyrics, where one of the characters gives forth in a studied manner his sentiments, and the dialogues in prose which serve to lead up to their developments. Nevertheless, the distinction between prose and verse is, in the poem, far from being as apparent as in the Book of *Job* or in the *Psalms*, and it would be sheer temerity to seek to establish rigorous distinctions as to this point.

One very important fact bears out the preceding inductions, and completely reveals to us what was the nature of the drama amongst the ancient Hebrews. In the whole history of the Jews, before Herod, there is not a trace of a theatre at Jerusalem, even at the periods when this city was following in paths the most profane. Neither is there a trace of professional actors, nor of any institution whatever bearing a relation to scenic representations. One may even say *a priori* that institutions of this character would very soon have presented an appearance of idolatrous practices; that, doubtless, the people might not yet have seen the feasts of Baal, and that, amongst the declamations of the prophets, who often pursued objects much more objectionable, there might not have been directions against a usage so contrary to the simplicity of the Hebrew mind. The high priest Jason incurred the maledictions of his co-religionists for having established a gymnasium at Jerusalem, and for having celebrated Greek *fêtes* therein.[1]

[1] *Macc.* iv. 11, *et seq.*; 22 *et seq.*

Herod, in constructing a circus in his capital, wounded much more deeply still the Jewish conscience.[1] A lack of appreciation for grand fictions is one of the characteristics of the Semitic mind. The Mussulmans of our day have inherited strongly this ancient antipathy, while the efforts which have been made at Beirouth and in Algeria to introduce among the Arabs theatrical representations have not resulted in success;[2] and as to the *mysteries* which are acted in Persia on the anniversary of the death of Ali, they are a product of the Persian mind, so opposed in everything to that of Islamism.

This singular deficiency in the literature of the Semitic peoples proceeds, moreover, from a more general cause: I mean, from the absence of a complicated mythology, resembling that which is possessed by all the Indo-European peoples. Mythology, herself the daughter of primitive naturalism, is the fruitful source whence issues all epics and all dramas. The only two great original theatres of antiquity, the Greek and the Hindoo theatres (I persist in believing that the latter is not a copy of the former), spring directly from mythology, and derive from it most of their subjects; and it is not long ago since it was the

[1] Joseph. *Antiq.* XV. VIII. 1; *De bello jud.* I. XXI. 8.

[2] Poems in dialogue form, or accompanied by singers, are very common in the East; but whatever M. Ewald may say (*Die Dichter des Alten Bundes*, I. 39 *et seq.*; *Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, III. 459, note), these poems have always been far removed from the drama.

custom for people to found dramas on the simplest fictions of the fancy. Monotheism, in stifling the development of mythology, shattered with the same blow the theatre and grand poetical recitals amongst the Semites.

We have every warrant, then, in affirming that theatrical representations did not at Jerusalem partake of any public character. Whereas, on the other hand, the *Song*, if one sees in it only a literary composition, designed solely to be read, is inexplicable, the dryness and incoherency of certain passages denoting clearly a libretto designed to be completed by the playing of the actors and the music—one is forcibly driven to believe that this poem was represented in private theatricals and *en famille*. There is an opinion, first developed in a most ingenious manner by Bossuet,[1] then adopted by Lowth,[2] which is, since the discoveries of modern criticism, found to be perfectly admissible, viz., that the *Canticle* ought to be divided into days corresponding to those on which the *fêtes* and marriages take place. Perhaps it was played on these solemn occasions. The formulas, "Wake not up," etc. (II. 7; III. 5; VIII. 4), would appear to indicate what we call "waits." In two places, it is a question whether the scene has reference to the morning or the night (II. 17; IV. 6). The unity of character which the acts, regarded separately, present

[1] *Commentary upon the Song of Songs.* Pref.
[2] *Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews,* Third Part, lesson XXX.

each having its own *dénoûement*, and always a happy *dénoûement*, is thus very clearly set forth by this hypothesis. Finally, several circumstances in the representation, such as the procession of Part VIII., in which the young men of the village defile past in imitation of the bodyguards of Solomon, and in which the females represent the dames of Jerusalem (III. 11), the final scene of the paranymphs (VIII. 13), the two scenes representing the pursuit (Parts VII., X.), the passage V. 1, in which we see so clearly that the chorus at certain times was composed of the companions of the *fiancé;* the allusion which is made in the same passage to the continuation of the nuptial feast, according to Oriental usage, whilst the union of the espoused couple is accomplished; the *divertissement* of Part XII., as well as other traits, seem expressly designed for *noce* festivities. All that we know of the marriage feasts of the Hebrews[1] is in accord with this hypothesis. Marriage amongst the Hebrews was not accompanied by any religious ceremony. It was celebrated *en famille*, or, rather, in the centre of the village or of the tribe, by songs and dances, and with processions of lamps and of choirs of music, banquets accompanied with *jeux d'esprit*, such as riddles in verse. I doubt not that the *Song of Songs* was the most celebrated of these perform-

[1] See especially *Judges* XIV. 10, *et seq.;* Ps. XLIV.; I. *Macc.* IX. 37, *et seq.;* III. *Macc.* (apocr.), XIV. 6; *Evang. Saint Matthew* IX. 15; XXV. 1, *et seq.; Saint John* III. 29.

ances which were held on the occasions of marriage,[1] and which probably all turn upon a subject analogous to the latter. The *fiancé* and the *fiancée* seek one another, and overcome every obstacle in order to be reunited.

The defects which the *Song of Songs* seems to present, when we apply to it the ordinary rules of dramatic poetry, thus disappear. There is nothing more shocking, according to our ideas, than that the finales of acts, which, in place of keeping the interest in suspense, should provide a *dénoûement*, and thus make of the act an entire drama by itself. There is, on the contrary, nothing more natural than to find in each act a distinct performance, designed for each day of the *fête*. The resemblance which Parts VII. and X. have to one another would be a defect in a consecutive drama, where each scene is immediately connected with the one preceding. This is sufficiently accounted for by a series of *divertissements* which do not follow a rigorous plan. In fine, the *Song of Songs* is not an exception to that great law which shows to us the Hebrew mind, incapable of producing literary works having *grands ensembles* and a well-defined unity. The regular progress of an

[1] M. Ch. Schefer, who is so well acquainted with the Orient Mussulman, informs me that *divertissements* of the same kind are practised still at marriages in Damietta, and in certain localities of Syria. They last for several days, during which the bride appears each day in a different costume. These festivities take place in the harems; the invited, as is the case in our poem, form the chorus.

action always hastens the arrival of an event, a progress which constitutes the essence of the drama and of the epic, has never been well understood by them. In like manner, in the poem of Job, the discussion, from beginning to end, does not advance a step, and the last speaker takes up the question where each of the previous speakers has taken it up and left it; that is to say, at the point he set out at. In ancient times it was the Greek genius alone which had discovered the secret of the continuous march of events in poetry, and the art of combining secondary incidents in view of a *dénoûement*.

The *Song of Songs* ought then to be regarded as occupying a middle place between the regular drama and the eclogue or pastoral in dialogue form. It possesses less progressive action than the former. It has more plot than the latter in its action and incidents. The middle ages here offer us the nearest approximation. Without having a regularly established profane theatre, the middle ages had sometimes, in addition to the mysteries, scenic plays fairly well worked out. The *bourgeois* of Arras, especially, succeeded in creating some very ingenious amusements. The most celebrated of their performances, the *Play of Robin and Marion*, is, both in relation to the subject and to scenic arrangements, a perfect analogue of the *Canticle*. The principal data in both are the same, a shepherdess preferring

the shepherd, her lover, to a knight who wished to seduce her; the same changes of place and the same disposition of characters, there being only two principal parts, all the other actors constituting the chorus; the same means used to bring about the *divertissements* and the *cantilènes;* the same meaning to be attached to the unity and the march of the poem. The want of nobleness and of style, which spoiled almost all the works of the middle ages, and imprint upon them the seal of garish vulgarity, constitute the only difference between the old lyric pastoral of the Hebrews, and the work of Adam de la Halle. The poem of *Aucassin and Nicolette*, which, in the manuscripts, has the form of a romance besprinkled with *ariettes*, seem likewise to have had originally a dramatic arrangement analogous to that which we have been attempting to explain.

III.

To what period does the poem, whose plan and character we have been investigating, belong? This is a question which has greatly divided critics. Between those who attribute the *Song of Songs* to Solomon, and those who, like Eichhorn, Rosenmüller, Bertholdt, Kœster, Hartmann and Gesenius, believe it to belong to the last days of Hebrew literature (some have ventured to come down as far as the third century before Jesus Christ), there is an interval of 700 or 800 years. To speak the truth, we are of opinion that so great a divergence ought not to exist, and that it is owing to the incomplete method which the Hebraists of the school of Gesenius have followed in the determination of the age of Hebrew books. Pre-occupied exclusively with grammatical niceties, they have too often neglected the historical and literary considerations, which are not less important than those of philology in questions of the kind that we are now treating of.

The title which the *Song of Songs* bears in the Hebrew text, implies a distinct attribution of the poem to Solomon. But such an attribution can in no

wise be maintained. Solomon plays in the poem a part which is manifestly sacrificed, and sometimes almost ridiculous. In a multitude of places, a touch of opposition or of ill-humour is allowed to present itself against the harem of this prince, and against the manners which the sumptuous royalty of the son of David caused to prevail. Verses VIII., 7, 11-12, embody a bitter derision of his power, and a sort of retaliation which partook of the old free spirit of the tribes in regard to the servility which absolute power had already created about him at Jerusalem. It is hence certain that the present title was added at a period comparatively modern, and that when the poem was no longer well understood. The vague name of *Sir hassirim* was unquestionably not the original title (to the extent that our version carries one); it presupposes that the poem, at the head of which it is inscribed, was already celebrated. We know that, in the attribution of works to the authors of antiquity, the scribes permitted themselves often to be guided by the most superficial considerations. The name of Solomon being inscribed in the title of the *Song of Songs* no more proves the designation of the real author than does the name of David inscribed at the head of several psalms, which notoriously, and by the admission of every one, could not be by this king. Let us add that a multitude of details (I. 4, 5, 12; III. 6-11; IV. 4; VII. 6; VIII. 11-12) formally banishes the idea that Solomon may himself have

written the drama in which he appeared as an actor, and that, too, in a *rôle* often so little flattering to his vanity.

There is no mention made, nor absolute citation to be discovered, of the *Song of Songs* in other Hebrew works. But I find a very probable allusion to our poem in the book of Jeremiah.[1] "I will cause to cease in the cities of Judah and the places of Jerusalem the shouts of joy and the songs of gladness, *the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride,* for all the land shall be desolated." What do these words signify—*the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride,* used as synonymous with *songs of joy?* It would be the height of affectation to regard them simply as conversations which the *fiancés* had had with each other at Jerusalem. Everything goes to show that these phrases were applied to a particular species of gladsome poems, and to a kind of literary composition then in vogue, and of which the *Song of Songs* was the most celebrated specimen. Perhaps the words of Jeremiah קולהתן וקולכלה give us the title by which, before the captivity, they were designated.

Many resemblances are to be remarked between verses of the *Canticle* and passages in other Hebrew books, especially in the Book of *Proverbs.* That of

[1] VII. 34; XXV. 10. We know that Jeremiah is the most scholarly of the ancient Hebrew authors. Almost every work anterior to his time is referred to in his book.

verse VI. 9, and of *Prov.* XXXI. 28, are the most striking. But none of these *rapprochments* furnish solid inductions,[1] for it is difficult to determine on which side the imitation may have taken place; besides, there are here some peculiarities which, in a manner, are public property, and run off spontaneously from the pen of every writer. It is only in a general way that the *Canticle* ought to be regarded as belonging to the epoch of the Kings, an epoch in which these kind of peculiarities were in some sort the common places of Hebrew poetry. It is in an examination of the *Song of Songs* itself that we must seek for precise indications of the question under discussion; for a poem which adheres so closely to popular customs cannot fail but reveal to us the state of the nation at the time it was written.

This revelation is one of such transparency that we are surprised it has not struck the whole race of critics. One passage (VI. 4) is of itself a sufficient demonstration. The Shulammite in point of beauty is compared in it to Tirzah and Jerusalem. The author here brings into juxtaposition the capitals of the two kingdoms of Judah and of Israel. Now Tirzah was the capital of the kingdom of Israel from the reign of Jeroboam to that of Omri, 975 to 924, before Jesus Christ. In 923 Omri built Samaria, which became thenceforward the kingdom of the north. From this period Tirzah almost disappears from history; its

[1] See the discussion of Hitzig. *Das Hohe Lied*, p. 9.

downfall was so complete that its situation is unknown, and it is now no longer attempted to represent it upon the maps of Palestine. How could a poet subsequent to the captivity, or even in the last days of the Kings, after the fall of the kingdom of Israel, have the idea of putting the forgotten city of Tirzah in juxtaposition with Jerusalem? The antipathy against Samaria was such at this period that it is wholly inadmissible that any one should cite as a type of beauty a city of the north. If it is said that the author desired to paint the manners of the time of Solomon, and chose Tirzah in order to give a local colouring to his picture, this is but to raise up fresh difficulties. For Tirzah was only the capital from the schism which took place under Rehoboam; consequently, it is necessary to accuse the poet of an inadvertence irreconcilable with the finished design he has been credited with. Let us suppose a poem in which Clovis played a part, and in which Aix-la-Chapelle figured by the side of Paris; we should confidently affirm that this poem must have been written under the first Carloviginians; in short, a learned poet of a more modern age could not have been guilty of such an inexactitude, and the error of ingenuous poets always consists in transporting into the past the world which is under their eyes.

This passage alone would justify us in affirming that the first adaptation of the *Canticle* must have been anterior to the year 924 before Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, it is evident that it is posterior to the death of Solomon and to the schism, which happened in the year 986. We are thus brought to fix within very narrow limits the date of the composition of our poem. But indications like that drawn from the name of the city of Tirzah is not an isolated case; many other circumstances prove, in a very complete manner, that the *Song of Songs* was composed a short time after the death of Solomon.

So far, in fact, from the reign of that prince being represented therein with those legendary characteristics, which should invest a distant ideal, it appears there in a character singularly determined. The king's defences consist of sixty *forts;* his arsenal contains a thousand bucklers; his seraglio comprises sixty queens and eighty concubines. Such is the true state of affairs. We know that the bands which made the fortune of David, and which were bequeathed to Solomon, were not very numerous; an arsenal containing a thousand bucklers, at a period so little removed from the anarchy of the Judges, appeared an unheard of marvel. Doubtless, at a more recent period, and in the mouth of a poet, sketching a hyperbolic ideal, these modest figures might have become thousands of thousands. In the book of the *Kings,* and in the book of *Chronicles,* in which some legendary and exaggerated documents might be mixed up with original and exact docu-

ments, the numbers are very much greater,[1] forty thousand appears to be the round number affected by the author; the harem is composed of seven hundred queens and three hundred concubines. The riches and the power of Solomon are described with an emphasis which gives to the sobriety of our poem a singular relief. A multitude of incidents, such as the mentioning of Heshbon[2] (Heshbon had ceased to be a Jewish city at the time of Isaiah);[3] the familiar relations with the ancient Arab tribe of Kedar; the circumstance that the luxurious equipages are called the "Chariots of Pharaoh"[4] (we know for certain that Solomon bought at great expense horses and chariots in Egypt);[5] the lively impressions of the reigns of David and of Solomon; the mention of the Mahanaïm dances, which we regard as the most ancient traditions of Israel,[6]—all point to the same result, or at least render inadmissible the opinion of those who would place the composition of the *Canticle* after the captivity, a period when the recollections of the ancient kingdom had become much effaced.

The spirit of the poem, if I may say so, furnishes

[1] I. (III. according to the Vulgate) Kings v. (vi. according to the Vulgate); x. xi.; II. Chron. i. 10.

[2] Seetzen saw them still existing in 1805.

[3] Is. xv. 4; Jeremiah xlviii. 2.

[4] i. 9.

[5] I. (III. Vulgate) Kings x. 29; II. Chron. i. 17. See Gesenius Thes., p. 942.

[6] *Compare* Genesis xxxii.

arguments even more decisive. In every page we perceive the opposition that the luxury and the habits of the Egyptians and Tyrians, rather than that of the Israelites of the time of Solomon, had excited in the breasts of the representatives of ancient Hebrew simplicity. There is no doubt that the poet was animated by a spirit of strong dislike against the king; the establishment of the harem, especially, appeared to irritate him to a great degree, and he experiences a lively pleasure in representing to us a simple shepherdess victorious over the presumptuous sultan, who believed that he could purchase love, like everything else, for its price in gold. We know that the principal animosity of the republican Israelites against royalty was the right which the king assumed of taking their daughters to make domestics of them.[1] We know, likewise, that the great expenditure of Solomon was odious to the tribes of the north, and that it was one of the causes of the revolt which occurred after his death.[2] Our poem seems to embrace the result of this twofold opposition. Now, such a view could only be arrived at in the years immediately succeeding the death of Solomon. The transient discontent which resulted from the royal expenditures were speedily forgotten; soon after only the monuments of it remained, without a question being asked as to what they had cost. The recollections of the

[1] I. Samuel VIII. 13.

[2] I. (III. Vulg.) Kings XII. 4, *et seq.*; II. Chron. X. 1, *et seq.*

sufferings which rendered the reign of Louis XIV. odious to the people, and made the latter insult his obsequies, were soon effaced by the general impression of grandeur which his reign had left behind it, and by the forms of admiration which the rhetoricans made fashionable in speaking of him. It was the same with Solomon. At the time of his death, we see the hatred against his administration produce a violent revolution; later, we find nothing but glowing legend and enchantment.

The freshness, the *naïveté*, the youthfulness of the poem, suffice to persuade us that the *Song of Songs* belonged to the period when the genius of Israel had reached its liveliest and most unrestrained point. Never shall we believe that wholly profane compositions like our poem, or like the Book of Job,[1] could have been the progeny of an epoch of rabbinism and of littleness of spirit, such as was that of Esdras, and even (in going further back) that of Josias and Jeremiah. The Jewish nation, setting out with this grand triumph of pietism, becomes absorbed by its religious idea; to it, art becomes indifferent, and is only made use of, as in a few of the psalms, in

[1] I have sometimes been tempted to place the *Koheleth* or *Ecclesiastes* in the same category. But the latest study I have made of this work has convinced me that it belongs to a modern epoch, and that it must be assigned to the period of the re-awakening of parabolic poetry, which took place about the time of Alexander. Solomon being the chosen representative of that kind of literature, it is to him that people persisted in ascribing the works composed in imitation of the old Hebrew sages.

celebrating the Law of Jehovah. Every one of the bold and comprehensive works of the Hebrew genius, works which I should rather call Semitic than Jewish, in the sense that the neighbouring peoples to Palestine possessed a similar literature, and that there has only been found in it the special seal of the Jewish spirit, must be placed before the times of the great religious vocation of Israel. Henceforth, in fact, a vast difference makes itself felt in the poetic creations of the Hebrew people. Ruth, Job, the Shulammite, the *Femme forte*—all these ancient types, imprinted with a masculine vigour, give place to the pious heroines, to the Judiths, to the Esthers, devoted victims of the faith which had been preached to them by holy persons, such as Esdras and Nehemiah, to a few types of interior devotion, such as are represented in the Book of Tobias. There is an indefinite interval between the compositions of that period of decadence and the bold enchantments of our poem. The pride of the young republican of the tribes of the north, and his disdain for Solomon, would not have any longer had any object at an epoch when almost all Israel was embraced in Jerusalem, and when Solomon had become a miracle of wisdom, the model of an accomplished prince. Compare Esther with the Shulammite, for example. The former, by assuming the truculent manners of an eunuch, finds no difficulty in pushing her fortune, and in gaining by her complaisances the favour that another woman would have

forfeited by her pride;[1] a motive excuses all in her eyes: the interest and the vengeance of her co-religionists. The latter yields to promptings much less subtle (*raffinés*). The sincere love for the lover she has left behind in the village, the taste for the fields, the hatred of the artificial life of the seraglio, the sentiment of the simple and noble manners of the tribe—these were her religion.[2] The *éclat* of Solomon's court, to which succeeding ages had given a sort of semi-sacred ideal, inspired her only with disgust and contempt. The gladness, the openness, the liberty of spirit which breathe throughout the poem, are the inverse of the sentiments which prevail in the literary monuments of the dogmatic and godly ages.

But there is one consideration to which I am disposed to attribute even greater importance. We shall presently establish that the allegorical explanations of the *Song of Songs* (explanations, assuredly, of which the author never dreamt) began to take shape in the century which preceded and the century which followed the Christian era. In other words, about the time of Jesus Christ, the *Song of Songs*, together with the ideas that people had arrived at in respect of canonicity, had become a source of embarrassment, from which there was no means of escape except

[1] See especially chapter II. of the Book of Esther.

[2] The piquante expression of these old ideas is found to be opposed to the new customs introduced by royalty in the 1st Book of *Samuel*, ch. VIII.

in pious subterfuge. Let us picture to ourselves the consequences which, in adopting the hypothesis that the *Song of Songs* was composed 300 or 400 years before Christ, would result from this fact. Two or three hundred years after the period when such a book might have reflected the popular conscience, people have come to regard it as scandalous, and feel that it is their duty to give it a different acceptation! This is inadmissible. We can quite well understand how a pious book like the *Wisdom* of Jesus, son of Sirach, came to be canonised a short time after its composition, for the canonisation of writings, which was neither the Law nor the Prophets, implied only a certain aptitude to produce edification, something analogous to the character which the Catholic Church attributes to the *Imitation*, the *Spiritual Combat*, etc., by the side of the Bible. We can understand even better how that a very old book, though little edifying, became sacred, and how that it came to be surrounded with a halo of pious allegory, for antiquity has been, with all peoples, the principal factor in veneration. But that a book at once so profane and modern should be unhesitatingly accepted as canonical is out of the question—impossible. For, in a word, if people were scandalised at the libertinism of the work, why approve it? Canonicity, in this epoch, did not understand *inspiration* in the sense that Christians have attached to this word, but it implied, at least, the opinion that the book was pious. If, then, the

artificial composition of the *Song of Songs* at a modern epoch is contrary to all the probabilities of literary history, the canonicity of the book and the allegorical interpretation which was applied to it, are much more inconceivable still in the hypothesis which we are combating. For, on the one hand, this canonicity, not being founded on the internal character of the work, can only rest on the single ground of its antiquity, and, on the other, the allegorical interpretation supposes that the book, when explained in such a manner, was entirely foreign to the popular usages. Such misconstructions can only be practised on old texts which no longer correspond to the spirit of the times, and which are no longer well understood.

What are the reasons, then, which have led some eminent critics to adopt an hypothesis in regard to the age of the *Song of Songs* which explains so badly both its literary style and its symbolic character? One only, and one, assuredly, very grave, but one which requires to be considered with the closest attention. I mean the style of the poem. The language of the *Song of Songs* has appeared to the minute grammarians who have analysed it that, for at least a century, the science of the Hebrews inclined towards the forms of the Chaldean epoch, that is to say, the epoch which began a little before the Captivity. To them it appears that several words can only belong to the Persian epoch, or even to the Greek. Chaldeanisms, when reference is had to the age of

Hebrew books, are a very dangerous *criterium.*[1] Certain peculiarities of the dialects of the north of Palestine, or some traits of the common language, are often taken for Chaldeanisms. In that which concerns the *Song of Songs,* these two solutions are equally applicable. On the one hand, we have a popular book, and on the other, we shall show presently that this book was probably written in the kingdom of the north. Now, the popular language and the language of the tribes of the north trench both very strongly upon the Aramean. The pure Hebrew of Jerusalem became, at an early period, a sort of classic tongue which the purists alone spoke—a tongue which was at once concise, rhythmic, and enigmatic, in the common use of which people preferred its more analytical and scientific forms to those which were to be found in the Aramean. There are no idioms from which we can draw any conclusions as to the modern date of the *Song of Songs* that are not thus to be explained in a sufficient manner. If the style is somewhat loose and very different from that of the ancient Hebrew poetry, it must be borne in mind that this violent contortion, similar to that of a cord firmly plaited, which characterise the verse of Job, for example, would not be suitable for a composition designed for such humble uses. The language of Plautus has even more resemblance to the low Latinity than that of Cicero and Seneca. As for the words in

[1] See *Hist. générale des langues Semitiques,* I. II. c. 1. sec. 3.

which traces are believed to have been found of Greek and Persian influence, one only merits consideration, and that is the word *pardès*, "park." This word, by common consent, could not have entered into the Hebrew any more than it has into the languages of Western Asia, and into the Greek (παράδεισος), except at the Achemenidian period. The argument of those who would bring down the *Song* to the Greek or Persian epoch is here better founded. Still, I own that I hesitate to to do violence to a whole series of concordant inductions for a single embarrassing word. The text of works which had little religious importance were not so strictly guarded as to permit us to appeal to a peculiarity in a detached style when the question is one of the compilation of the whole book. It may be that the *Song of Songs* served for a long time as a popular ballad, and was not written down till some considerable time after. We know that these kind of unwritten songs were subjected, in the mouth of the people, to perpetual changes. Let us add that the Achemenidian origin of the word *paradis* is, perhaps, not incontestable.[1] The Achemenides might have borrowed the word and the thing itself from the great royal houses which had preceded them in Western Asia. The word is of

[1] The Greeks believed in this origin (see *Thess. linguæ Græcæ* edit. Didot, on the word παράδεισος). But it is natural they should ascribe the words to the people who had transmitted them, without being at the trouble to find out whether this people itself had not accepted it otherwise.

Ayrian origin, but it is not specially Iranian. It seems rather to be connected with the Armenian.

We persist, then, with Herder, Ewald, de Wette, B. Werzel and Hitzig, in placing the composition of the *Song of Songs* a little after the schism, that is to say, about the middle of the tenth century before Christ. This was one of the most licentious epochs of the Hebrew genius. No great prophet appeared about this time to impose his spirit upon the nation; religious institutions had not the rigour which they attained later on; royalty at Jerusalem timidly continued the ostentatious customs inaugurated by Solomon; but the old republican spirit had its abode in the north, and very soon reached a climax on the appearance of the most seditious of the prophets—the demagogue Elias. It was in the midst of these historic surroundings that, in our opinion, the author of the *Song of Songs* moved. This is equivalent to admitting, as most probable, an hypothesis proposed by Ewald and Hitzig, according to which our poem must have been composed in the north. We can understand quite well how a poem proceeding from the kingdom of Israel would place on the same level the little capital of Tirzah and Jerusalem, whilst we cannot conceive it in the case of a Jerusalemite. The antipathy against the harem of Solomon, composed of the "daughters of Jerusalem," is also a feature which does not fit in with the north. The style carries us to the regions bordering on Syria. Finally,

the *rapprochements* which M. Hitzig[1] has established between our author and Hosea, who, as we know, was an author from the north (eighth century before Jesus Christ), if they do not distinctly prove that this prophet had read the *Song of Songs*, prove, at least, that the two authors were surrounded by the same circle of images, and were familiar with the same expressions.[2] We scent in them, if I may say so, the aroma of the north, at once green and fresh. Palestine of the north, as is justly observed by M. Réville,[3] appeared in the history of the Israelites, as less accessible to religious spiritualism, less prone to a reaction contrary to nature and to a natural life, than the Palestine of the south. It was there, too, that popular poetry seems to have taken its boldest flights. It is thence that has come to us the patriotic Song of Deborah, the Apologue of Jotham (Judges IX. 5-20); the narratives of Gideon, Jephthah, and of Samson, in which the poetic element holds so great a place; the prophecies of Hosea, so strongly coloured; the prophets who did not write, but whose vigorous impression upon the popular imagination is attested by history, Elias and Elisha, the legend of Jonah, etc. Let us add that the natural beauties of the country of Lebanon, an agricultural country of mar-

[1] *Das Hohe Lied*, p. 9-10.

[2] This consideration is especially important, if we remember that the very ancient poets present always a poverty of expression, and make no effort to vary their periods.

[3] *Revue de Théologie de M. Colani*, May 1857, pp. 278-279.

vellous fertility, rich in woods, in grassy plains, in running streams, were better inspirations for pastoral poetry than the sandy and somewhat rocky districts of the south. Let us add, further, that, with the exception of Engedi, Jerusalem, and Heshbon, the whole of the localities cited in the poem, Sharon, Gilead, Tirzah, Lebanon, Amana, Shenir, Baal-hamon and Shulam, the country of the heroine, appertain to the kingdom of the north.

IV.

THE history of the preservation and the interpretation of the *Song of Songs* is too singular, and gives birth to problems that are too nearly allied to the nature of the book itself, to be passed over here in silence. There can be no doubt that, in its inception, the *Song of Songs* was not a profane book, in the ordinary acceptation of that term. Not only is there no mystical afterthought left in it to be divined, but the contexture and the plan of the poem absolutely exclude the idea of an allegory. The tone and the images of the impassioned utterances are those of the love songs of the Arabs, in which no one has ever pretended to find a trace of religious symbolism.

One solitary argument may be invoked to uphold the possibility of a religious *arrière-pensée* in the *Song of Songs:* to wit, the mystical-erotic poetry of India and Persia. We know that, in those two countries, a vast literature has been developed, in which divine and terrestrial love are interwoven in such a fashion that it is often difficult to distinguish between them. The origin of this singular species

of poetry is a question that has not yet been cleared up. In many cases, the mystical sense which has been lent to certain Persian and Hindoo erotic poetry has no more reality than the allegories of the *Song of Songs*. In Hafiz, for example, it seems indeed that the allegorical explanation is oftener a product of the commentator's fancy, or mere precautions which the admirers of the poet were obliged to take in order to save the orthodoxy of their favourite author. Imagination then mounting this theme, and minds being deceived by an exegesis which would see nothing but allegories, people came to give to the poem a really double sense, like those of Djelal-Eddin Roumi, de Wali, etc. A distinct line of demarcation, in fact, divides these later poems, in which the author has actually sought to conceal a mystical thought under an erotic form, from those in which the mystical thought has been invented by some complaisant exegetes. In India, at least, the allegorical exegesis seems to have preceded the allegorical poems, and to have been the cause of their composition.[1] However it be on this point, it is quite certain that neither in India nor in Persia is the kind of poetry of which we speak very ancient. Soufism, to which it is attached in Persia, began only to produce such writings towards the twelfth century of our era. The most celebrated mystical-erotic poem of India, the Gita-

[1] *V.* Albert Weber, *Histoire de la Littérature Indienne* (trad. Sadous), pp. 330-331.

Govinda de Jayadeva, belongs, in all probability, to the middle of the fourteenth century.[1] The Adhyatma Ramayana, another poem of the same kind, does not appear to be more ancient.[2] In India and Persia, this kind of poetry is the result of an extreme refinement and a lively imagination, carried the length of quietism, of a strong liking for mystery, and also in Persia, at least, by the hypocrisy imposed by Mussulman fanaticism. It is, in fact, a sort of reaction against the barrenness of Islamism that Soufism has made headway among the non-Arab Mussulmans. There is to be seen in it a revolt of the Aryan spirit against the hideous simplicity of the Semitic spirit, excluding by the rigour of its theology all individual worship, all secret doctrine, all living and varied religious devotion.

It is evident that no reconciliation could be established between the products of a mysticism so advanced and a pastoral drama which has not, like ours, any religious pretensions. And, first, if the author had really had any theological pretension, it is not the dramatic form that he would have selected:

[1] M. A. Weber has kindly sent me a short memoir, full of science and criticism, in which the date above indicated is established by *rapprochements* which have great weight.

[2] What is indubitable, at least, is that it is not anterior to the eleventh century. M. Weber has established this as a positive fact. A silly synchronism, which is difficult to comprehend, is the almost simultaneous appearance of a similar allegorism, although of a much less religious character, in the Latin world by Francis d'Assisi, Dante, and the Florentine school in general.

the lyric form alone becomes those sort of debauched metaphysics. To what improbabilities, however, do we not expose ourselves in placing a great development of transcendental theology in Judea, in the tenth century before Jesus Christ? Nothing was ever more removed from mysticism than the ancient Hebrew spirit, than the Arab spirit, and, in general, than the Semitic spirit. The idea of putting the Creator *en rapport* with the creature, the supposition that they could be enamoured of each other, and the thousand refinements of this kind in which Hindoo mysticism and Christian mysticism go hand in hand, are the very antipodes of the severe Semitic conception of God. It is unquestionable that such ideas could only be regarded in Israel as blasphemies. Up to the last or second last century before the Christian era, there had been no secret doctrine in the bosom of Judaism. These kind of religious allegories indicate always a certain necessity for concealment, a retaliation against some exterior compression. Under the refined language of the Soufis, under the burning lyrical passion of Louis de Léon, under the studied quietude of Madame Guyon, one feels the intolerant rigour of orthodox Islamism, the inquisition, and of Gallican Catholicism. Now, the history of the Jewish people does not present, at least before the epoch of the prophets addicted to a severe Mosaism, and the pietest kings, any example of persecution on account of doctrine. The old patriarchial religion was so

simple, so natural, and so little embarrassing, that no one thought of seeking to evade it. The mystical-erotic poems, in a word, implied that there was around them a great development of the philosophical and theological schools. Now, no people has been more discreet in regard to symbolism, allegories, and speculations as to the divinity, than the Hebrews. Drawing a line of absolute demarcation between God and man, all familiarity, all tender sentiment, all reciprocity between heaven and earth, were rendered impossible. Christianity has changed only in this sense, by doing violence to its Judaic origin, and in provoking the anger of true Israelites, who have remained faithful to the severe notion of the Divinity.

We regard it, then, as certain that the author of the *Song of Songs*, in writing his poem, had no mystical intention. Why, and at what epoch, did the idea of seeing in this poem an allegorical and sacred work begin to be formed? The answer, it seems, must be that the want of an allegorical and mystical signification made itself felt, when the idea of the canonisation of the ancient books had gained consistency. Saved from the wreck of ancient Hebrew books because of its celebrity, and of its almost daily use, the *Song of Songs*, in consequence of the difficulties which it presented, ceased very early, probably from the days of Esdras and of Nehemiah, to be thoroughly understood. It is nevertheless improbable that, from that time, it was looked

upon as sacred; the Law, the historical books and the prophets, had alone at that period a recognised authority. But little by little the idea of inspiration was extended and determined. About the time of the Maccabees, all the ancient books were much venerated,[1] and about the epoch of Jesus Christ, they were sacred. The authors of New Testament books never cited, it is true, the Old Testament as a body of works; they refer incidently to the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.[2] But Josephus, their contemporary, gives us a canon of books "reputed divine," of which the *Song of Songs* forms a part.[3] We can understand the revolution that such a notion of canonicity must have produced in the exegesis. The *Song of Songs*, which had passed almost into oblivion from the time of Esdras to the Christian era, must have appeared a scandalous book when looked at from the point of view of rigorous orthodoxy, whose chief pretension was that the canonical books comprised nothing that was not holy. People thought, hence, of saving the honour of the ancient poem by searching in it for an allegorical meaning. But as their explanations rest upon the most complete arbitrary grounds, no system has accepted un-

[1] See Ecclesiasticus, prologue. This prologue was written about 130 years before Jesus Christ.

[2] See especially Luke xxiv. 44.

[3] *Contre Apion*, i. 8. The text of Josephus leaves us in doubt as to whether he understood the *Song* in an allegorical sense, or in a purely human sense.

reservedly the above, hence the multitude of interpretations, often poetic, sometimes insignificant, which have been put forth by both Jews and Christians, with an exuberance of imagination which produces sometimes veritable astonishment.[1]

It is, then, in the first century before our era, or in the first century after Jesus Christ, that it is proper to place the commencement of the allegorical exegesis of the *Canticle*.[2] The preference for this perverted sense was never more strong than at that period, as we see in Philo, the Evangelists, St Paul, and in the Talmud.[3] A doctor of the second century, well versed in the science of the Scriptures, Melito, Bishop of Sar-

[1] It is important to observe, moreover, that these interpretations were not most often given by those who imagined them, as representing the idea of the author. The usages of rigorous philology, which leads us to seek only in a text for that which the author had intended to say, did not belong to those times. A text was something objective, independent of the intentions of him who wrote it, a theme, in short, which every one expounded after his own manner. When Etienne Langton in the twelfth century composed a sermon in praise of the Virgin on the song, *Bele Alix matin leva*, he did not pretend that, in the intention of the author of that song, *Bele Alix* had been the Virgin. In like manner, when such a preacher would moralise on Ovid, he, doubtless, did not maintain that Ovid had had the ideas which he had set forth (*v. Histoire Littérature de la France*, tome XXIII. p. 250, *et seq.*). At these periods everything became a text, or rather pretexts, for so-called allegories and homilies.

[2] The traces of the allegorical explanation of the *Song*, which some have believed to discover in the *Book of Wisdom*, Ecclesiasticus, the Gospels, the Apocalypse, the fourth book (Apocrypha), Esdras, and in Josephus, are wholly doubtful.

[3] The same exegesis was current for a long time with the Greeks, at least with Homer (*V.* Egger, *Hist. de la Critique chez les Grecs*, p. 55, *et seq.*).

dis, had already constructed a *key* to these allegories.[1] The so-called Greek version of the Septuagint does not present, it is true, for the *Song of Songs* any trace of mystical interpretation, but the Syriac version seems to offer one;[2] the Talmud is full of them. The Christians, above all, in greatly exaggerating the ideas of the Jews in respect of canonicity and inspiration, were obliged to make desperate efforts to find in the *Song* a mystical sense. Theophilus of Antioch, in the second century, explains *the wood of Lebanon* by Ruth, which comprises in its bosom the whole race of David, and the *litter* by *the souls which carry God in themselves*.[3] Origen, finally, in the third century, gave the first complete allegorical explanation of our poem, laying down as a principle that everything which appeared in the Bible to be unworthy of divine inspiration, and, consequently, everything which did not serve for the edification and instruction of the reader, must embrace some hidden meaning, and declared that the love in question of the *Song of Songs* could only be divine love, and that this poem was nothing else than the epithalamium of the Church with her celestial bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

[1] Numerous remains of this ancient symbolism have been collected together, but not always with enough discernment as to dates, by Don Pitra in the vols. II. and III. of his *Spicilegium Solesminse*.

[2] The Chaldean Targum is impregnated throughout with allegories, but it is posterior to the Talmud.

[3] Gallindi, *Bibl. Patr.* tom. II. pp. 141-142. The ascription of this passage to Theophilus of Antioch is not altogether a certainty.

After this, we can understand how the inductions we have drawn are denuded of their value, in favour of the mystical interpretation, of the presence of the *Song* in the canon and of the tradition which, for eighteen centuries, ascribes to it a pious sense. Why suppose, say people, that a purely profane book could be accepted as a sacred book? Is not this consecration a proof of the religious character which from that time the book so adopted presents? Let us observe, first, that even though it should be proved that, at the period when the Jewish canon was formed, the *Song* was held to be allegorical, it does not thence follow that it was in the mind of its author, since, between its composition and canonisation, eight or nine centuries must have rolled over. We have found in Persia and in India some poems to which all commentators ascribe some theological sense, and which, however, in their origin possessed nothing mysterious. Let us observe, further, that the symbolic hypothesis was formed at a period when all sentiment of veritable exegesis was lost, and when the taste for allegorical interpretations had been pressed to foolish lengths. There is not a book in the Bible which has not been subjected to contortions of this kind, and, in order to be consistent, the partisans of tradition were obliged to treat the book of Ruth also as an allegory, for this book has an allegorical explanation as complete as the *Song of Songs*. The ancient Jewish exegesis admitted that each passage of the Bible had seventy senses, all

equally true, and among a maze of senses, anagogical, tropological, etc., which acknowledged the Christian interpretation, the literal sense was almost the only sense which was neglected. Remark, finally, that the above argument rests upon a false notion of the canonicity current among the Jews. The idea of a strictly limited canon, and of a divine inspiration which was uniform in all the books contained in the canon, is a Christian, not a Jewish, idea.[1] The ancient Jewish doctors permitted the fullest criticism of the reputed sacred books—of *Ecclesiastes* and the *Song of Songs*, for example.[2] When people began to regard indifferently the ancient books as a *repertoire* of wisdom, there was no longer any choice to be made. Time had solved the question: all that remained of the old literature, even that portion which did not correspond with the religious sentiment of the period, was carefully preserved. It was in this way that moderately instructive works passed for sacred. The *Song of Songs*, in fact, is not the only book to which the objection that I am answering may be applied. The book of *Proverbs*, and several of the *Psalms*, are moral, but not religious works. The book of *Job* is a philosophical and controversial book; no work resembles less a sacred book. The psalm *Eructavit cor meum*, is an epithalamium like the *Song of Songs*.

[1] *Vide* the excellent observations of M. Derenbourg upon this point in the *Archivos Israelites*, March 1856.

[2] *Vide* de Wette, *Einleitung*, sects. 276-283.

Ecclesiastes, in fine, although composed at a modern epoch, and containing much that is so singular, was none the less consecrated, because, at the period when the first ideas of canonicity were formed, it was found to be read by lettered men. Canonicity, though embracing a wholly religious idea, appears, then, as a matter of fact, to have been applied to some works which had hardly any religious character, and people were at a loss to know how to treat the efforts which were subsequently made to sanctify these works which might have, in the mind of the author, the sense that a pious tradition ascribed to them.

It does not enter into our plan to follow up the whole of the arguments of that singular exegesis, which, from the point of view of a rabbinical or Christian *literateur*, possesses a certain interest, but which is of no value in the interpretation of the book itself.[1] One solitary voice, previous to the sixteenth century, was raised in support of the justness of this sound exegesis, to wit, that of Théodore de Mopsuestus. The condemnations of the second council of Constantinople show the scandal which his opinion caused. In the middle ages, not a single doubt was raised, nay, new allegories were even invented, namely, the great extension which was made to the cult of the Virgin;

[1] This history has been set forth with much erudition and judgment in a thesis which was argued before the Faculty of Protestant Theology of Strasburg, by M. Ed. Cunitz. *Hist. Crit. de l'Interpretation du Cantique des Cantiques* (Strasburg, 1834). See also the article of M. Réville in the *Revue de Théologie* of M. Colani, April 1857.

the Shulammite was identified with Mary, and almost all the characteristics of the *Song of Songs* were applied to the mother of God. The absence of real exegetical and philosophical studies in the monasteries and universities, joined to a habit of seeking in the Scriptures for distorted and arbitrary senses, precluded any doctor of the time from divining the true interpretation of the *Song of Songs*. The first Protestant theologians differed in no particular from the Catholic tradition. In fine, the Jewish exegetes, like all the others affected with the mania, gave to it a figurative explanation. When the Arab philosophy became the fashion amongst them, the Shulammite became the *intellect actif* to which the individual soul aspired to be united.[1] Some gleams of a better method penetrated the Jewish school. Several rabbis, like Aben-Esra, carefully distinguished the literal sense, the reality of which they recognised, from the mystic sense: we sometimes even see orthodox interpreters arguing with illiterate persons who regarded the *Song* as a profane poem. But the names of these bold disputants have not come down to us, and I do not believe that a single Jewish doctor of the period of which we speak would have dared to oppose to the reigning prejudice as to the indispensable necessity of seeking for the antique idyl of Israel, any other sense than the literal one.

[1] Upon the origin and progress of this singular interpretation, see Steinschneider, in the *Encyl.* of Ersch and Gruber, Section II. part XXXI. p. 53, *et seq.*

The first, after Théodore de Mopsuestus, who dared to maintain that the *Song of Songs* was a profane book, was the noble and unfortunate Sebastian Castalion. He pushed his opinions to extremes, and, through an error which must have exercised a hurtful influence upon the exegesis, he declared it to be an objectionable book—a book which should be struck out of the canon. His opinion found no supporters for nearly a century. Grotius and Jean Leclerc revived it, the former timidly and awkwardly, the latter decisively and keenly. A mitigated opinion was formed by another group, which included Vatablé (or the author, whoever he was, of the notes published under his name), Bossuet, and Lowth. According to this opinion, similar to that of Aben-Esra, the two senses, the one natural, the other mystic, both existed, and ought both to be upheld. There was, hence, amongst the theological opinions of the time, a veritable progress which allowed Bossuet, in particular, to advance ideas as to the plan of the poem much more correct than those which any one before him had done.

The grand exegetical school which was formed in Germany towards the close of the last century, laid down at length the essential condition of a good interpretation of the *Song*, in absolutely discarding the mystical sense, or, at least, in proving from evidence that the author had not had in view any other sense than that which conformed with the letter. Semeler, J. D. Michaelis, and Herder exult-

ingly insist upon this point.[1] But this was far from finding a key to the poem. The principal obstacle to a good interpretation was thus removed, but the work still presented in itself a veritable chaos. The error of Castalion engaged the most enlightened minds. It was difficult to make people believe that, if the *Song* was not a mystical, it was an obscene book. The idea that Solomon was the object of the love of the shepherdess closed the door completely to a satisfactory interpretation. Neither Grotius nor Leclerc, who had demonstrated the vanity of mystical explanations, nor Bossuet, who had so artfully discovered the literal character and division of the work, did not perceive that which constituted its essential meaning: to wit, the love of the Shulammite for a lover who was not Solomon, her resistance to the proposals of the king, and her triumph over the seductions of the seraglio.

The first who established this fundamental point was J. F. Jacobi (1771). Michaelis had already clearly perceived that the *Song*, interpreted literally, was far from being an object of scandal. He had proclaimed that the love which was chanted

[1] The allegorical interpretation finds still at the present day, in Germany, two defenders in MM. Hengstenberg and Delitzsch. But their arguments, so denuded of reason, and much less poetic than those of the Fathers, the scholastics, and the theologians, are conceived from a standpoint wholly different from those of the critic or the philologist. M. Delitzsch has acknowledged, however, that the author of the *Song* had only in his mind the natural sense.

therein was sincere love (*castos conjugum amores*). But Jacobi found the explanation of the enigma in demonstrating that the subject of the drama was "the victory of the faithful lovers;" that the heroine was a shepherdess brought to the court to minister to the sensual desires of the king, and that, far from setting forth unbecoming ideas, the poem was, in the mind of the poet, perfectly moral. The *rôle* of the shepherd, which is the *nodus* or plot of the whole poem, began henceforth to disengage itself. Anton, Ammon, Stæudlin, Lindemann, and especially Velthusen (1786), developed the idea of Jacobi in discarding the subtle explanations which had been confounded in it. But such are the obscurities which, according to our modern ideas, this singular poem presents, that the methods pursued by these ingenious critics were not at first able to command universal assent. A contrary method, which regarded the *Song* as a simple collection of love songs, amongst which we must not seek for either bond or consecutive plan, an idea which had already seduced Richard Simon, found numerous adherents—Herder, Dœderlein, Hufnagel, Kleuker and Eichhorn, and, even in our own day, Dœpke, Magnus, and de Wette.

The vast labour of philology and criticism which, in the first half of our century, has brought about such great progress in the knowledge of ancient Hebrew literature, has fully confirmed, by modify-

ing several points of detail, the hypothesis of Jacobi and Velthusen. The able studies of MM. Umbreit (1820), Ewald (1826), and Hitzig (1855), in putting wholly to one side so many doubts, have obtained an almost unanimous assent,[1] and triumphantly established the plan of the *Song* and its true character. The poem is neither mystical, as the theologians would have us believe, nor objectionable, as Castalion has thought, nor purely erotic, as Herder would have it; it is moral; it is summed up in a verse, the 7th of chap. VIII., the last of the poem. "Nothing can overcome sincere love; where riches aspires to purchase love, it purchases only shame." The object of the poem is not the voluptuous passion which insinuates itself into the seraglios of the degenerate East, nor the equivocal sentiment of Hindoo or Persian quietism, concealing under its deceptive mask its refined hypocrisy, but true love, the love inspired by courage and sacrifice, preferring unconstrained poverty to servile opulence, opposing a vigorous hatred to all that is false and base, and resulting in undisturbed happiness and fidelity.

Thus the difficulties, both in the eyes of theologians and of critics, raised by the book on which we are now engaged, have been solved. Even in the eyes of the critic, it must have appeared strange that, from

[1] We can name, among those who have adhered to their opinion, MM. B. Hirzel, Bœttcher, E. Meier, Veth, Hœkstra, and Réville. This opinion has become in a manner classic in Germany, Holland, and England.

amongst this literature, there should proceed one of the props of the faith of humanity, from amongst the monuments of this Hebraic thought, always grave and reserved, one of those venerated writings which have passed the ordeal of so many pious scribes, to appearance an equivocal booklet, a poem consecrated unreservedly to sensual love. The *Song of Songs* is no such work.[1] It is neither to the purely erotic poems of India, such as the poetry of Amarou and Bhartrihari, nor to the poetry of Hafiz, nor to the *maouals* of the Arabs, that the present poem must be compared. The *Song of Songs* is a profane book, but it is not a frivolous book. The traits of detail, though they may seem to shock our modesty (too often carried to a ridiculous extent), are those which are to be found in all antique poetry. Voltaire did wrong in making game of it, and the faithful were wrong in feeling scandalised. It should be remarked, however, that the only two really sensual passages in the work (I. 2-4; VII. 2-10) are designed to represent the harem and the manners of the court of Solomon in a most hideous light, and serve to produce a sort of contrast. The sentiment of the book, like that of all Hebrew books, is pure, and, if the execution sometimes lacks delicacy and discrimination, yet these latter qualities, the product of our attenuated modesty, are by no means characteristic of the Semitic genius in

[1] See the excellent reflections of M. Réville in the *Revue de Théologie*, May 1857, p. 284, *et seq.*

general. For my part, I find the *Song*, understood in its natural sense, much more sacred than many other books which do not shock us very much—the Book of Esther, for example, which is inhuman, boastful, cruel, and arrogant, whence God is absent (it is the only book in the Bible in which the name of God is not once pronounced). I might even say that the *Song of Songs* is of great importance as touching the honour of the Jewish people, in the sense that it brings out qualities in the Hebrew mind which, but for it, would never have been suspected. In view of the terrible tension of that austerity of character which has produced the ardent passion of a David, and the fanaticism of the prophets, one might be tempted to believe that there could be no lodgment for any sentiment of tenderness and of goodness in the mind of such a people. The *Song of Songs* proves that, if the grandiose struggle in which Israel engaged stifled for a certain period the purely human part of its development, this part of the Hebrew character had its season, and produced its flower. Israel, become the *people of God*, ought not to make us forget the young Israel at the time of the patriarchs; Israel, the Arab tribe, whose spirit was continued, especially in the kingdom of the North, and in whose bosom developed freely a life wholly profane, though eclipsed in the end by the incomparable *éclat* of the religious vocation.

From the point of view of enlightened philosophy,

it was then an error to believe that the *Song*, if it was not a scandalous book, must be a mystical book. But the conscience of humanity was never so wholly deceived. Such is the force of religious sentiment, that it knows how to give a double sense of beauty and of charm. The mystical sense is false philologically, but true theologically. It corresponds to that grand sanctification of love which Christianity has inaugurated. The Shulammite has taken the Christian veil; under this veil she is beautiful still. In a word, why regret this garland of poetic falsehoods which the Christian imagination has woven round the object of its favourite dreams, when one remembers that, without this network of pious deceptions, mystical souls should never have had their holy book? What love can be more pure than is contained in that beautiful *Vulnerasti cor meum* which the Church chants at its feasts? Those litanies of the Virgin, and those hymns composed wholly of melancholy images or *brûlantes empruntées* to the sacred idyll[1] which have caused many tears (the best, perhaps, which have been shed on earth) to flow! Let it be added that the Christian interpretation has given to the *Song* what in the original it lacked of transparency and delicacy. The Christian Shulammite is, indeed, more distinguished than the ancient virgin of

[1] See in particular several hymns of Adam de Saint Victor (t. II., pp. 189, 340, edit. Gautier), and of his school (Pitra, *Spicil Solesm.* III. p. 451).

the tribe of Issachar; the delicacy of sentiment of modern races has corrected that which the Hebrew genius lacks of polish and brightness.

Within the compass of the ancient *Song* has thus been constructed a book altogether different from anything Hebrew—infinitely curious, however, and in a manner sacred. In philology the letter alone ought to be considered. In the original development of humanity, it is the spirit which giveth life. To be the fruit of mystical conceptions far removed from those of ancient Israel, the mystical spouse which æsthetic Christians have evolved from their dreams ought not to be banished from amongst the consecrated images. Yet, by being a stranger to the subtle theology of her Christian sister, the poor shepherdess, who preferred to Solomon him whom she loved, ought no longer to be disdained. None of her contemporaries in the heathen world, although more civilised—the Chamite and Couschite races—has accomplished what she has done; no daughter of Memphis or of Babylon, a thousand years before Jesus Christ, has resisted a king, or preferred a hut to a seraglio. The Shulammite was a saint of her time. She signalised the first appearance of the virtue of love the moment when, sensual though it yet was, the profound instinct which God has concealed in the bosom of human nature attained, in the free and proud conscience of a young Israelite maiden, the highest sphere of morality. Do not criticise, according to the rules of our modern

proprieties, each sentence of the ingenuous peasant girl; do not require of her the extrême refinements of a Saint Theresa. She is a simple daughter of *naïve* antiquity. Though her heart was not touched with the flame of seraphic fire, she knew "that love was stronger than death," she felt "the glow of the fire of Jehovah."

I am not one of those who regard love as the most exalted principle of human morality, and who would have it believed that man is only grand when he yields to that passion. That which makes man noble is duty and right; in reality, he is only great when he subordinates his passions to a desirable and disinterested end. Still less am I one of those who make much of that selfish and unpoetical love of the east and the south, which has never inspired a high thought, and has contributed in nothing to ameliorate the condition of humanity. But the profound sentiment which plays so essential a part in the history of the progress of morals ought not to be confounded with that inferior pleasure, the residuum of sensual humanity, which civilisation has vanquished. After duty, love, such as it has been transformed into by the greatest races, has been the mainspring of ennoblement, and the potent lever in elevating the human species to a more perfect ideal. It must not be put in the front rank with the gods; neither must it bring down to the level of things terrestrial the virtuous sentiment which sheds a ray on the brow

the most tarnished by selfishness, an illusion which has crossed lives the most melancholy, a fugitive moment of poetry which has dragged from their lairs the most vulgar natures. Love increases or diminishes, according as the noble elements of humanity are raised or abased. In base epochs, people do not even know how to love; and there can be no doubt that if, in default of honour, our leaden age has at least preserved the vigour of the strong passion, it will not be so easily reduced to the pitiful pursuits of riches without consideration, and honours without glory. Amidst *bourgeoises* engrossments which have ever been the lot of the greatest number, there is still left scope for great ambition and daring enterprises. A principle secondary to nobleness, but most efficacious in the case of those to whom duty appears too abstract, love possesses for him, in addition, the incomparable *éclat* of virtue and genius. The book which, ten centuries before Jesus Christ, demonstrates this to us, though not yet distinguished or delicate, but true and strong, is then, in a sense, a sacred book. Let us place it boldly in the ark in which holy things are guarded; let the theologian believe that, to save the honour of the old song, it must be travestied, and to those who, for reasons of propriety, would defend this superannuated interpretation, let us recall the response of Niebuhr[1] to a young

[1] I am indebted for this trait in the life of Niebuhr to M. le Baron de Bunsen.

parson who was grieved at the necessity of admitting into the Biblical canon a song of love. "For me," said the illustrious critic, with animation, "I should think that the Bible was lacking in something if one could not find in it expression for the deepest and strongest sentiments of humanity."

THE SONG OF SONGS.

THE SONG OF SONGS.

ASCRIBED TO KING SOLOMON.[1]

I.

Let him kiss me with a kiss of his mouth! Thy caresses are sweeter than wine, when they are mingled with the fragrance of thy exquisite odours; thy name is as oil poured out. Hence it is the young maidens love thee. I, 2 3

Draw me after thee: let us flee. The king has brought me into his harem.

Our transports and our delights are for thee alone Better far are thy caresses than wine. Right are they in loving thee.

II.

I am black, but I am comely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the pavilions 5 6

[1] This title is posterior to the composition of the poem, and implies an attribution manifestly erroneous.

of Solomon. Despise me not, because I am a little black, because the sun has scorched me. My mother's sons held me in contempt: they sent me into the fields to keep vineyards. But, alas! mine own vineyard have I indeed badly kept.

III.

I, 7 Tell me, O thou whom my heart loveth, whither thou leadest thy sheep, where thou makest them repose at noon, so that I stray not, as one wandered, around the flocks of thy companions.

8 If thou knowest not this, O thou fairest of women, get thee again to the footsteps of thy flock, and cause thy kids to pasture beside the shepherds' tents.

IV.

9 I have likened thee, O my love, to my young *cavale* (mare), when she is yoked to the chariots sent
10 me by Pharoah.[1] Thy cheeks are adorned with rows
11 of pearls, thy neck with strings of corals. We will make thee necklaces of gold, pointed with silver.

V.

12 While the king is in his divan, the spikenard wherewith I am scented[2] sent forth its fragrance.

[1] The chariots which Solomon got from Egypt, the horses of which were covered with ornaments resembling necklaces.

[2] That is to say, her lover; the thought is to her as a perfume.

My beloved is to me as a bundle of myrrh; he shall repose betwixt my breasts. My beloved is to me as a cluster of camphire, from the vineyards of Engedi. I, 13 14

Yea, thou are fair, my love; yes, thou art fair. Thy eyes are as doves' eyes. 15

Yea, thou art fair, my beloved; yes, thou art charming. Our bed is a bed of green. 16

The beams of our palace are of cedar, our panels of cypress. 17

I am the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valleys! II, 1

As a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among the maidens. 2

As an apple tree among the trees of the forest,[1] so is my beloved among the youths. I have longed to sit under his shadow, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. 3

He brought me into his wine house, and the banner[2] he raised over me was love. Stay me with grapes, fortify me with fruits, for I am dying of love. 4 5

His left hand sustains my head, and his right embraces me. 6

I beseech you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and the hinds of the fields, awake not, awake not my beloved until it pleases her. 7

[1] That is to say, a tree with fruit among trees which have none.

[2] A flag was hoisted over the wine house, in which the wine was distributed. See Moallaca d'Antara, v. 52, and Lebid, v. 58. Caussin de Perceval, *Essay upon the History of the Arabs*, I. 11, p. 525.

VI

II, 8 It is the voice of my beloved; behold he cometh
bounding over the mountains and skipping upon
9 the hills. My beloved is like to a roe or a hind's
fawn. Behold him who standeth behind the wall,
10 who looketh forth of the window, who peepeth
through the lattice. He said unto me, "Arise, my
love, my fair one, and come away. For behold the
11 winter is ended, the rain is past, it has gone. The
12 flowers begin to appear on the earth. The time of
the singing [of birds] is at hand. The voice of the
turtle has been heard in our fields; the tender shoots
13 of the fig tree begin to ripen; the vine is in bloom
and exhales its fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair
14 one, and come away. My dove, nestled in the clefts
of the rock, concealed on the summit of the high places,
show me thy countenance, make me to hear thy
voice; for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is
lovely."

15 Take us those foxes, the little foxes, that ravage
the vines, for our vineyard is in blossom.

16 My beloved is mine, and I am his . . . my
beloved, who maketh his flock to feed among the
17 lilies.[1] At the hour when the day shall cool, and the
shadows lengthen, return, my beloved, and be thou

[1] The plains of Sharon are, in certain seasons, covered with lilies, like as are our plains with colchicum in autumn.

like unto a roe or a hind's fawn upon the *clefted mountains.*

VII.

On my bed by night, I sought him whom my heart III, 1
loveth: I sought him and I found him not. . . . I said 2
to myself: "I will arise; make the circuit of the city; pass through the market places and the highways, and seek for him whom my heart loveth." I sought for him and I found him not. The watchmen who 3
make the round of the city encountered me. I said to them: "Hast thou seen him whom my heart loveth?" Hardly had I passed from them when I found him 4
whom my heart loveth. I laid hold of him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house, into the chamber of her that had given me birth.

I beseech you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the 5
gazelles and the hinds of the fields, awake not, awake not my love until it pleases her.

VIII.

Who is this that ariseth out of the desert,[1] like a 6
pillar of smoke, giving forth the fragrance of myrrh,

[1] That is to say, "who appeareth on the horizon," Jerusalem for a considerable distance being girdled by deserts.

of frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumers?

III, 7 Behold the palanquin of Solomon. Threescore valiant men from amongst the valiant of Israel
8 surround it; these all bear swords and are practised in war; each hath his sword upon his hip in order to dispel the terrors of the night.
9 King Solomon had made for himself a couch of
10 the wood of Lebanon. The posts were of silver, the pilasters of gold, the curtains of purple. In the centre sparkled a *beauty* chosen from amongst the daughters of Jerusalem.[1]
11 Go forth, O daughters of Sion, and behold King Solomon, wearing the crown wherewith his mother crowned him[2] on the day of his espousals, the day of the gladness of his heart.

IX.

IV, 1 Of a truth thou art fair, my love; yea thou art fair. Thy eyes are as doves' eyes, under the folds of thy veil. Thy hair is like a flock of goats, depending from the sides of Gilead.
2 Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep newly shorn, which have just been washed, each of which bears
3 twins, and none is barren. Thy lips are like a thread

[1] Au centre brille une belle choisie entre les filles de Jérusalem.

[2] Bathsheba, mother of Solomon, always exercised much authority over him.

of purple, and thy mouth is charming. Thy cheek is like the one side of a pomegranate behind thy veil. Thy neck[1] is like the tower of David, builded to IV, 4
serve as an armoury, in which are suspended a thousand breastplates, and all the bucklers of the valiant. Thy two breasts are like the two twins of a hind, 5
which feed among the lilies. When the day shall 6
cool, and the shadows lengthen, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense.

Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no blemish 7
in thee.

Come with me, come with me, my spouse! Come 8
with me from Lebanon: look upon me from the top of Amana, from the summit of Shenir and Hermon, from the depths of the lions' dens, from the tops of the mountains which the leopards inhabit. Thou hast 9
ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one of the ringlets which encircle thy neck. How pleasant 10
is thy love, my sister, my spouse. How sweet are thy embraces. They are better than wine, and the odour of thy perfumes than all balsams. Thy lips, my 11
spouse, distil honey; honey and milk are concealed under thy tongue, and the odour of thy garments is as the odour of Lebanon. My espoused sister is a 12
garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed; a grove where the pomegranate blossoms together 13

[1] Because of the necklets which encircle it, and cause it to resemble a tower decked with armour.

with the most pleasant fruits, camphire with
IV, 14 spikenard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon, with all manner of fragrant trees; myrrh and aloes, with all
15 manner of sweet-smelling plants; a fountain in a garden, a spring of living water, a stream which
16 descends from Lebanon. Awake, north winds, come, south winds, blow upon my garden, that its fragrance may be diffused.

Let my beloved enter into his garden, and let him taste of its choicest fruits.

V, 1 I have entered my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my myrrh and my balsam: I have eaten my sweets and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk. Eat, O friends, drink, drink abundantly, O beloved!

X.

2 I sleep, but my heart is awake. . . . It is the voice of my well-beloved![1] He knocketh, saying, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is all covered with dew, the locks of my hair are all dropping with the night mists. I
3 have cast off my coat; wherefore wouldst thou that

[1] The vision of the beloved is identified in everything which follows with the beloved himself, according to a figure much used by the Arab poets, and called *Thaif al Khaïâl*. See *Asiatic Journal*, April 1838, p. 378, *et seq.* (Art. de M. de Slane).

I put it on again? I have washed my feet: wherefore should I defile them?" My beloved now put his hand V, 4
through the lattice, and my bosom quivered thereat. I
arose to open to my beloved. My hands were found 5
to be dropping with myrrh, my fingers with liquid
myrrh, which covered the handle of the lock.[1] I opened
to my beloved, but my beloved had vanished, he had 6
fled. The sound of his voice had bereft me of reason.
I issued forth; I sought for him and found him not;
I called after him, and he answered me not. The
watchmen who go about the city encountered me: 7
they smote me; they bruised me; the keepers of the
wall stripped me of my veil. I beseech you, O 8
daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, tell
him that I am dying of love.

In what is thy beloved better (than another), O
thou fairest of women? In what is thy beloved 9
better (than another), that thou dost so charge us?

My beloved is white and ruddy; you would tell him 10
amongst a thousand. His head is as fine gold; the 11
locks of his hair are as flexible as palm leaves, and as
black as a raven. His eyes are as doves' eyes reflected 12
in streams of running water, like pigeons bathing
themselves in milk, perched on the rim of a full vase.
His cheeks are like a bed of balsam, like unto a bank 13
of sweet-smelling plants; his lips are as lilies gush-

[1] *At lacrumans exclusus amator limina sæpa*
Floribus et certes operit, posteisque superbos.
Unguit amaracino.—LUCRECE iv. 1173-5.

V, 14 ing with myrrh; his hands are as rings of gold en-
amelled with stones of Tharsis; his reins are as a
15 masterpiece in ivory, overlaid with sapphires; his legs
are as pillars of marble set on pedestals of gold; his
countenance is as Lebanon, beautiful as the cedars.
16 From his palate is diffused sweetness; his person is
altogether lovely. Such is my beloved, such is my
friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

VI, 1 Whither is thy beloved gone, O fairest among
women? Whither has he turned aside, that we may
seek for him with thee?
2 My beloved has descended into his garden; he has
reached the beds of balsam, that he may feed his
3 flock in the gardens, and gather lilies. I am my
beloved's, and my beloved is mine. . . . my be-
loved, who maketh his flock to feed among the lilies.

XI.

4 Thou art beautiful, my love, as Tirzah,[1] charming as
5 Jerusalem; yet terrible as an army in battle. Turn
thine eyes away from me, for they distress me. Thy
hair is as a flock of goats, depending from the sides
6 of Gilead. Thy teeth are like unto a flock of sheep
which have just been washed; each of them bears
7 twins, none of them is barren. Thy cheek is as one
side of a pomegranate under the folds of thy veil.

[1] A city in the north of Palestine, which, from the time of Jeroboam to that of Omri, was the capital of Israel.

There are threescore queens and fourscore con- VI 8
cubines, besides young maidens without number.
But the jewel is my dove, my undefiled; she is 9
the only one of her mother, the chosen one of her
who gave her birth. The young maidens saw her,
and proclaimed her blessed; the queens and the con-
cubines saw her, and praised her.

Who is this whose countenance is as Aurora, fair 10
as the moon, clear as the sun, yet terrible as an army
in battle?

XII.

I descended into the garden of nuts, to see the 11
herbs of the valley, to see whether the vine had
budded, whether the pomegranates were in flower.
Oh, fatal step! that this caprice should plunge me 12
into the midst of the chariots of a prince's train!

In mercy, in mercy, O Shulammite,[1] in mercy turn VII, 1
thou, that we may look on thee.

Why look at the Shulammite, in preference to a
Mahanaïm[2] dance?

How beautiful are thy feet in thy sandals, O 2
prince's daughter. The curves of thy thighs are

[1] That is to say, an inhabitant of Shulam, or Shunen, a city of the tribe of Issachar.

[2] An ancient city celebrated for its bayaderes and for the orgiastic cults which were practised there.

like that of a necklace, the work of a skilled hand.
VII, 3 Thy navel is as a round goblet, full of aromatic wine;
4 thy belly is as a heap of wheat encircled with lilies;
thy two breasts are as the two twins of a gazelle;
5 thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thy eyes are as the fishpools of Heshbon, near the gate *Fille de la foulé;* [1] thy nose is erect and proud, like the tower of Lebanon,[2] as seen from the side of Damascus. Thy
6 head is like Carmel; thy locks are like threads of
7 purple; a king is enchained to their *boucles.* How fair and how pleasant art thou, O my love, in the
8 moments of embrace! Thy stature is like unto a
9 palm tree, and thy breasts unto grapes. I said, I will go up to the palm tree; I will cluster its branches. Thy breasts are to me as clusters of grapes; thy
10 breath as the odour of apples; thy mouth like the most exquisite wine, which droppeth sweetly and moistens the lips of the eager lover!
11 I am my beloved's, and he is mine, therefore it is that his desire is towards me.

XIII.

12 Come, my beloved; let us go forth into the fields,
13 let us sleep in the village. Let us arise early to go

[1] Bathrabbim, one of the gates of Heshbon.

[2] One of the towers which David had built in the north of Palestine, to serve as a post of observation against the Syrians. (2 Sam. viii. 6.)

to the vines; let us see whether the vine stocks have budded, whether the shoots have opened, whether the pomegranates are in flower. There I will give thee my caresses. The apple of love [1] gave forth its VII, 14
perfume; at our gate are heaped up the most beautiful fruits; new and old, I have guarded them for thee, O my beloved. O! that thou wert as my VIII, 1
brother, who has sucked the breasts of my mother, so that I could, when I should meet you without, embrace thee, and not be despised therefor! I would 2
lead you, bring you into my mother's house; there thou wouldst instruct me in everything, and I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, the juice of my pomegranates.

His left hand sustains my head, and his right 3
embraces me.

I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, awake 4
not, awake not my well-beloved until it pleases her.

XIV.

Who is this that issues from the desert, leaning 5
upon her beloved?

I awoke thee under the apple tree. Behold the

[1] Mandrake, or belladonna, to which popular opinion ascribed secret virtues.

house in which thy mother conceived thee, in which she gave thee birth.

VIII, 6 Set me now as a seal upon thy heart, as a bracelet about thy arm, for love is strong as death; passion inflexible as hell.[1] Its brands are the brands of fire its arrows the fire of Jehovah.[2]

7 Great waters cannot quench love, rivers cannot extinguish it. If a man would seek to purchase love at the sacrifice of his whole substance, he would only reap confusion.

XV.

8 We have a little sister who has no paps. What shall we do with our sister, the day in which she shall be sought after?

9 If she be a wall,[3] let us make her towers of silver; if she be a door,[4] let us make her panels of cedar.

10 I have been a wall; my breasts have been my towers;[5] and this is why I have been allowed by
11 him[6] to depart in peace. Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-Hamon;[7] he let it out to keepers, each of

[1] Which never relaxes its prey.
[2] That is to say, lightning.
[3] An inaccessible virtue.
[4] A less severe virtue.
[5] That is to say, my virtue has been put to the severest test.
[6] Solomon.
[7] A locality in the north of Palestine.

whom gave him a thousand pieces for his portion.
Behold, my vineyard, in front of me! A thousand VIII, 12
pieces for thee, Solomon, and two hundred pieces for
the keepers of the vineyard.

XVI.

Thou fair one who dwellest in this garden, com- 13
panions[1] draw near and lend thine ears; make me
to understand thy voice.

Flee, my beloved, and be like unto a roe or to a 14
hind's fawn upon the mountains of spices.

[1] The young men of the village, paranymphs of the lover.

TRANSLATION

INTO WHICH IS INTRODUCED THE DIVISIONS AND THE SCENIC EXPLANATIONS.

THE SONG OF SONGS.

—o—

ACT I.

The scene is supposed to represent Solomon in the midst of his seraglio.

SCENE I.

A LADY OF THE HAREM.

Let him kiss me with a kiss of his mouth! . . .

THE LADIES OF THE HAREM, *in chorus.*

Thy caresses are sweeter than wine, when they are mingled with the fragrance of thy exquisite odours; thy name is as oil poured out. Hence it is the young maidens love thee.

THE SHULAMMITE,

Led in by force, and addressing herself to an absent friend.

Draw me after thee: let us flee. The king has brought me into his harem.

THE LADIES OF THE HAREM, *to Solomon.*

Our transports and our delights are for thee alone. Better far are thy caresses than wine. Right are they in loving thee.

THE SHULAMMITE.

I am black, but I am comely, O daughters of Jerusalem, like the tents of Kedar, like the pavilions of Solomon! Despise me not because I am a little black; because the sun hath scorched me. My mother's sons held me in contempt: they sent me into the fields to keep vineyards. But, alas, mine own vineyard have I indeed badly kept.[1]

SCENE II.

THE SHULAMMITE, *musing.*

Tell me, O thou whom my heart loveth, whither thou leadest thy sheep, where thou makest them repose at noon, so that I stray not, as one wandered, around the flocks of thy companions.

A WOMAN OF THE HAREM.

If thou knowest not this, O thou fairest of women, get thee again to the footsteps of thy flock, and cause thy kids to pasture beside the shepherds' tents.

SOLOMON.

I have likened thee, O my love, to my young filly, when she is yoked to the chariots sent me by Pharaoh. Thy cheeks are adorned with rows of pearls, thy neck with strings of corals. We will make thee necklaces of gold, pointed with silver.

SCENE III.

THE SHULAMMITE, *alone.*

While the king is in his divan, the spikenard wherewith I am scented sent forth its fragrance. My beloved is to me as a bundle of myrrh: he shall repose betwixt my breasts. My

[1] That is to say, my maiden modesty. She makes allusion to the surprise of which she has been a victim. (*See* Act V., Scene II.)

beloved is to me as a cluster of camphire, from the vineyards of Enged.

Solomon enters.

SOLOMON.

Yea, thou art fair, my love; yes, thou art fair. Thy eyes are as doves' eyes.

THE SHULAMMITE, *addressing herself to an absent friend.*

Yea, thou art fair, my beloved; yes, thou art charming. Our bed is a bed of green.[1]

SOLOMON.

The beams of our palace are of cedar, our panels of cypress.

THE SHULAMMITE, *singing.*

I am the rose of Sharon,
The lily of the valleys![2] . . .

THE SHEPHERD, *who enters abruptly on the scene.*

As a lily among thorns, so is my beloved among the maidens.

THE SHULAMMITE.

As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the youths. I have longed to sit under his shadow and his fruit is sweet to my taste.

The two lovers are reunited.

THE SHULAMMITE.

He brought me into his wine house, and the banner he

[1] She recalls the time when she was in the village.

[2] The Shulammite sings this couplet, which, probably, was a part of a popular song, in order to reassure her lover of her fidelity, and to reveal to him her presence. (See above, Act II., Scene II.).

raised over me was love. (*To the chorus.*) Stay me with grapes, fortify me with fruits, for I am dying of love. . . .

She falls in a faint into the arms of her lover, and says, in a low voice:

His left hand sustains my head, and his right embraces me.

THE SHEPHERD, *with the chorus.*

I beseech you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and the hinds of the fields, awake not, awake not my beloved until it pleases her.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

THE SHULAMMITE, *alone, and as if in a dream.*

It is the voice of my beloved; behold he cometh bounding upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like to a roe or a hind's fawn. Behold him who standeth behind the wall, who looketh forth of the window, who peepeth through the lattice. He said unto me, "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. For behold the winter is ended, the rain is past, it has gone. The flowers begin to appear on the earth. The time of the singing [of birds] is at hand. The voice of the turtle has been heard in our fields; the tender shoots of the fig tree begin to ripen; the vine is in bloom, and exhales its fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. My dove, nestled in the clefts of the rock, concealed on the summit of the high places, show me thy countenance, make me to hear thv voice; for thy voice is sweet, and thy countenance is lovely."

(*She sings.*)

Take us those foxes, those little foxes
That ravage the vines;
For our vineyard is in blossom.[1]

My beloved is mine, and I am his . . . my beloved, who maketh his flock to feed among the lilies. . . . At the hour when the day shall cool, and when the shadows lengthen return, my beloved, and be thou like unto a roe or a hind's fawn upon the *clefted mountains.*

SCENE II.

THE SHULAMMITE.

On my bed by night, I sought him whom my heart loveth; I sought him, and I found him not. . . . I said to myself: "I will arise; make the circuit of the city; pass through the market places and the highways, and seek for him whom my heart loveth." I sought for him and I found him not. The watchmen who make the round of the city encountered me. I said to them: "Hast thou seen him whom my heart loveth?" Hardly had I passed from them when I found him whom my heart loveth. I laid hold of him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother's house, into the chamber of her that had given me birth.

The two lovers are reunited; the shepherdess swoons away in the arms of her lover.

THE SHEPHERD, *with the chorus.*

I beseech you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles and the hinds of the fields, awake not, awake not my love until it pleases her.

[1] She sings a spring lyric, which her beloved must recognise. (Compare Act I., Scene III., above).

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The scene takes place in the streets of Jerusalem.

CHORUS OF MEN, *composed of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

The cortége of Solomon begins to appear in the distance.

Who is this that ariseth out of the desert like a pillar of smoke, giving forth the fragrance of myrrh, of frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumers?

The cortége defiles past.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Behold the palanquin of Solomon. Threescore valiant men from amongst the valiant of Israel surround it; these all bear swords, and are practised in war; each hath his sword upon his hip in order to dispel the terrors of the night.

SECOND CITIZEN.

King Solomon made for himself a couch of the wood of Lebanon. The posts were of silver, the pilasters of gold, the curtains of purple. In the centre sparkled a *beauty* chosen from amongst the daughters of Jerusalem.

THE CHORUS OF MEN, *addressing the women who are supposed to be concealed in their houses.*

Go forth, O daughters of Sion, and behold King Solomon, wearing the crown wherewith his mother crowned him on the day of his espousals, the day of the gladness of his heart.

SCENE II.

The scene takes place in the harem.

Of a truth, thou art fair, my love: yea, thou art fair! Thy eyes are as doves' eyes, under the folds of thy veil. Thy hair is like a flock of goats, depending from the sides of Gilead. Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep, newly shorn, which have just been washed, each of which bears twins, and none is barren. Thy lips are like a thread of purple, and thy mouth is charming. Thy cheek is like the one side of a pomegranate behind thy veil. Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded to serve as an armoury, in which are suspended a thousand breast-plates, and all the bucklers of the valiant. Thy two breasts are like the two twins of a hind, which feed among the lilies. When the day shall cool, and the shadows lengthen, I will get me to the mountains of myrrh and to the hills of frankincense.

SCENE III.

The evening.

SOLOMON.

Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no blemish in thee.

THE SHEPHERD,

Supposed to be at the bottom of the seraglio.

Come with me, come with me, my spouse! come with me from Lebanon.[1] Look upon me from the top of Amana, from the summits of Shenir and Hermon, from the depths of the lions' den, from the top of the mountains which the leopards inhabit.

(*She sees him.*)

Thou has ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one of the ringlets which encircle thy neck. How pleasant is thy love

[1] Lebanon, and the imagery which follows, represent, in ambiguous terms, the inaccessible heights of the palace, and the dangers which menace the chastity of his beloved.

my sister, my spouse! How sweet are thy embraces. They are better than wine, and the odour of thy perfumes better than all balsams. Thy lips, my spouse, distil honey; honey and milk are concealed under thy tongue, and the odour of thy garments is as the odour of Lebanon. My espoused sister is a garden enclosed, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed;[1] a grove where the pomegranate blossoms together with the most pleasant fruits; camphire with spikenard, spikenard, saffron, calamus, cinnamon, with all manner of fragrant trees; myrrh and aloes, with all manner of sweet-smelling plants; a fountain in a garden, a spring of living water, a stream which descends from Lebanon. Awake, north winds, come south winds; blow upon my garden that its fragrance may be diffused.

THE SHULAMMITE.

Let my beloved enter his garden, and let him taste of its choicest fruits.

She gives him a kiss.

THE SHEPHERD.

I have entered my garden, my sister, my spouse. I have gathered my myrrh and my balsam. I have eaten my sweet and my honey. I have drunk my wine and my milk. (*To the Chorus.*) Eat, O friends; drink, drink abundantly, O beloved.

ACT IV.

A SINGLE SCENE.

THE SHULAMMITE, *alone.*

I sleep, but my heart is awake. . . . It is the voice of my well-beloved! He knocketh, saying "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is all covered with dew, the locks of my hair are all dropping with the night mists." "I have cast off my coat, wherefore wouldst thou that I put it on again? I have washed my feet; where-

[1] He is reassured of her fidelity.

fore should I defile them?"—My beloved now put his hand through the lattice, and my bosom quivered thereat. I arose to open to my beloved; my hands were found to be dropping with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, which covered the handle of the lock.[1] I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had vanished; he had fled. The sound of his voice had bereft me of reason. I issued forth, I sought for him, and found him not. I called after him, and he answered me not. The watchmen who go about the city encountered me; they smote me; they bruised me; the keepers of the wall stripped me of my veil. (*To the chorus of women.*) I beseech you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, tell him that I am dying of love.

THE CHORUS OF WOMEN.

In what is thy beloved better (than another), O thou fairest of women? In what is thy beloved better (than another), that thou dost so charge us?

THE SHULAMMITE.

My beloved is white and ruddy; you would tell him amongst a thousand. His head is as fine gold; the locks of his hair are as flexible as palm leaves, and as black as a raven. His eyes are as doves' eyes, reflected in streams of running water, like pigeons bathing themselves in milk, perched on the brim of a full vase. His cheeks are like a bed of balsam, like unto a bank of sweet-smelling plants; his lips are as lilies gushing of myrrh; his hands are as rings of gold, enamelled with stones of Tharsis; his reins are as a masterpiece in ivory, overlaid with sapphires; his legs are as pillars of marble, set on pedestals of gold; his countenance is as Lebanon, beautiful as the cedars. From his palate is diffused sweetness; his person is altogether lovely. Such is my beloved, such is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

THE CHORUS.

Whither is thy beloved gone, O fairest among women? Whither has he turned aside that we may seek him with thee?

(*The two lovers find one another.*)

[1] The shepherd is supposed to respond by a frolic to the frolic of his beloved.

THE SHULAMMITE.

My beloved has descended into his garden; he has reached the beds of balsam, that he may feed his flock in the gardens, and gather lilies. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. . . . My beloved, who maketh his flock to feed among the lilies.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The scene takes place in the harem.

SOLOMON.

Thou art beautiful, my love, as Tirzah,[1] charming as Jerusalem; yet terrible as an army in battle. Turn thine eyes away from me, for they distress me. Thy hair is as a flock of goats, depending from the sides of Gilead. Thy teeth are like unto a flock of sheep, which have just been washed; each of them bears twins, none of them is barren. Thy cheek is as a piece of pomegranate under the folds of thy veil. . . .

THE SHEPHERD, *from the outside.*

There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, besides young maidens without number. But the jewel is my dove, my undefiled; she is the only one of her mother, the chosen one of her who gave her birth. The young saw her, and proclaimed her blessed; the queens and the concubines saw her and praised her.

[1] The Shulammite, faithful to her lover, responds only to the caresses of Solomon with defiant looks.

SCENE II.

THE CHORUS.

Who is this whose countenance is as Aurora, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, yet terrible as an army in battle ?[1]

THE SHULAMMITE, *aside, and turning her back on the ladies of the harem.*

I descended into the garden of nuts, to see the herbs of the valley, to see whether the vine had budded, whether the pomegranates were in flower. O fatal step ! that this caprice should plunge me into the midst of the chariots of a prince's train ![2]

THE WOMEN OF THE HAREM.

In mercy, in mercy, O Shulammite, in mercy turn thou, that we may look on thee.

A DANSEUSE OF THE HAREM.

Why look at the Shulammite, in preference to a Mahanaïm dance?[3]

(*She dances.*)

SOLOMON.

How beautiful are thy feet in thy sandals, O prince's daughter. The curves of thy thighs are like that of a necklace, the work of a skilled hand. Thy navel is as a round goblet, full of aromatic wine ; thy belly is as a heap of wheat encircled with lilies ; thy two breasts are as the two twins of a gazelle ; thy neck is as a tower of ivory ; thy eyes are as the fishpools of Heshbon, near the gate *Fille de la foulé;* thy nose is erect and proud, like the tower of Lebanon, as seen from the side of Damascus. Thy head is like Carmel ; thy looks are like threads of purple ; a king is enchained to their *boucles.*

[1] The chorus is astonished at the defiant looks of the peasant girl.

[2] She tells of the manner in which she was surprised, during a morning walk by Solomon's servants.

[3] The danseuse is jealous, because of the effect which the beauty of the peasant girl has produced, and seeks to draw the attention of the seraglio away from her.

How fair and how pleasant art thou, O my love, in the moments of embrace! Thy stature is like unto a palm tree, and thy breasts unto grapes. I said, I will go up to the palm tree; I will cluster its branches. Thy breasts are to me as clusters of grapes; thy breath as the odour of apples; thy mouth is like the most exquisite wine, which droppeth sweetly, and moistens the lips of the eager lover!

THE SHULAMMITE, *persisting in her isolation.*

I am my beloved's, and he is mine, therefore it is that his desire is towards me.

SCENE III.

THE SHULAMMITE, *running towards her lover.*

Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields, let us sleep in the village. Let us arise early to go to the vines; let us see whether the vine stocks have budded, whether the shoots have opened, whether the pomegranates are in flower. There I will give thee my caresses. The apple of love gave forth its perfume; at our gate are heaped up the most beautiful fruits; new and old, I have guarded them for thee, O my beloved! O! that thou wert as my brother, who has sucked the breasts of my mother, so that I could, when I should meet you without, embrace thee, and not be despised therefor! I would lead you, bring you into my mother's house; there thou wouldst instruct me in everything, and I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, the juice of my pomegranates.

She swoons, and says in a low voice:

His left hand sustains my head, and his right embraces me.

THE SHEPHERD, *with the chorus.*

I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, awake not, awake not my beloved until it pleases her.

SCENE IV.

The journey from Jerusalem to the village is supposed to be effected.

THE CHORUS, *at the sight of the Shulammite, being carried away asleep by her lover.*

Who is this that issues from the desert, leaning upon her beloved?

The lovers are supposed to have reached the village.

THE SHEPHERD.

He disposes his beloved under the apple tree of her mother's house, and awakens her.

I awoke thee under the apple tree. Behold the house in which thy mother conceived thee, in which she gave thee birth.

THE SHULAMMITE.

Set me now as a seal upon thy heart, as a bracelet about thy arm, for love is strong as death; passion inflexible as hell. Its brands are the brands of fire, its arrows the fire of Jehovah.

A SAGE, *who appears to draw a moral from the poem.*

Great waters cannot quench love, rivers cannot extinguish it. If a man would seek to purchase love at the sacrifice of his whole substance, he would only reap confusion.

EPILOGUE.

The scene takes place at Shulam, in a pavilion at the bottom of the garden.

ONE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE SHULAMMITE.

They do not know of her abduction and her return.

We have a little sister who has no paps. What shall we do with our sister the day in which she shall be sought after?

ANOTHER BROTHER.

If she be a wall, let us make her towers of silver; if she be a door, let us make her panels of cedar.

THE SHULAMMITE, *intervening abruptly.*

I have been a wall; my breasts have been my towers; and this is why I have been allowed by him[1] to depart in peace. Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-Hamon; he let it out to keepers, each of whom gave him a thousand pieces for his portion. Behold, my vineyard is in front of me.[2] A thousand pieces for thee, Solomon, and two hundred pieces for the keepers of the vineyard.[3]

THE SHEPHERD,

At the bottom of the pavilion, where he is waiting with his paranymphes.

Thou fair one who dwellest in this garden, companions draw near, and lend thine ears; make me to understand thy voice.

THE SHULAMMITE.

Flee, my beloved, and be like unto a roe or to a hind's fawn upon the mountains of spices.

1 Solomon.
2 That is to say, I have known by myself how to guard my vineyard.
3 A piece of irony directed against Solomon and her brothers, who have so badly guarded her.

THE END.